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# Strategic Stories: An Analysis of the Profile Genre

Amy Jessee

Clemson University, [akjessee@gmail.com](mailto:akjessee@gmail.com)

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STRATEGIC STORIES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROFILE GENRE

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
Professional Communication

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by  
Amy Katherine Jessee  
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Accepted by:  
Dr. Sean Williams, Committee Chair  
Dr. Susan Hilligoss  
Dr. Mihaela Vorvoreanu

## ABSTRACT

This case study examined the form and function of student profiles published on five university websites. This emergent form of the profile stems from antecedents in journalism, biography, and art, while adapting to a new rhetorical situation: the marketization of university discourse. Through this theoretical framework, universities market their products and services to their consumer, the student, and stories of current students realize and reveal a shift in discursive practices that changes the way we view universities. A genre analysis of 15 profiles demonstrates how their visual patterns and obligatory move structure create a cohesive narrative and two characters. They strategically show features of a successful student fitting with the institutional values and sketch an outline of the institutional identity. As a result, the student profiles work to promote the university. In the context of the marketization of discourse, universities rely on the selectivity of the profile to appeal to prospective students as they select the best fit for their college experience.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

A Profile is a short exercise in biography—a tight form in which interview, anecdote, observation, description, and analysis are brought to bear on the public and private self. (Lahr, *Show and Tell*, p. xii)

For such a short form, the profile has several tall orders. As biography or art, profiles show a side of a person in as few lines as possible. Silhouette artists accomplish this goal by selecting prominent features of a subject in profile, then cutting these curves into contrasting paper to create a portrait outline. Writers take a similar approach, though they fill out their character sketches with quotations, events, and opinions, in addition to a physical description of their subject. Even these written profiles rely on the same selectivity of the silhouette, by featuring those characteristics that will stand out from the shadows. Though usually treated as fact, the profile mixes fact and fiction in the case of biography, craft and art in the case of silhouettes, and public and private identities in the case of organizational communication. In this last context, the profile becomes a means to span organizational boundaries and to merge identities of individuals and organizations. Moreover, the profile has become a powerful means of promotion, and this thesis examined one manifestation of this hybrid form in the context of university promotional discourse.

The goal of this thesis was to sketch an outline of profiles as a genre within a conception of the marketization of university discourse as outlined by Fairclough (1995). Extending from the consumerism of the 1960s and 1970s, marketization in the university

setting hinges on the metaphor of the student as consumer. As McMillan and Cheney (1996) explain, “academic institutions have come to operate as if they were ‘ordinary business’: obsessively seeking investors, adopting managerial fads (e.g. Total Quality Management) for staff appraisal and training, and hiring professional advertising and public relations agencies to promote the activities of the institution” (p. 4). McMillan and Cheney believe educational institutions should adapt to the needs of their constituencies, because in service organizations, such as schools, “the *client* should be considered both a temporary member of the organization *and* an inhabitant of the larger environment ‘out there’” (p. 5). Though they warn against over-extending the metaphor to the point that the product outweighs the educational process, the idea of students as consumers still fits the current model of higher education admissions, marketing, and public relations, particularly as more institutions turn to business models in times of economic downturn.

Through an application of Foucault’s perspective on discourse, Fairclough (1995) operationalizes this marketization as “restructuring the order of discourse on the model of more central market organizations” (p. 140). In other words, the public sector adopts the means of private discourse, and it adapts its genres. Universities provide a particularly telling example of this commodification of the public sector (p. 140). According to Cheney and Christensen’s (2001) synthesis of internal and external communication in this context, the marketing orientation of universities includes how students become engaged in their educational choices (p. 244). Wernick (1991) traces this engagement further through the education system. As universities adopt what he calls a “promotional culture,” ceremonial events such as graduation become advertising; the competition for

students manifests itself in brochures; class options constitute a smorgasbord or cafeteria-style buffet; grades and credits form an often competitive game; the professorial curriculum vitae extends the contest for career credit; and the commodity production flows through conference centers and the book trade. Fairclough offers similar examples in his analysis of job advertisements, job applications and curriculum vitas, and university prospectuses, all of which foreground promotional elements. He concludes that the revisions of these texts over time draw upon advertising genres, and current prospectuses are an “interdiscursively hybrid quasi-advertising genre” (p. 157).

Askehave (2007) takes the claim to the next level, when she posits that “many genres of higher education such as flyers, postcards, brochures and home pages on websites have become *fully* promotional texts” (p. 725). Through an examination of international university prospectuses, she discusses the subgenre of student and staff testimonials embedded in the prospectuses. The testimonial subgenre, like the prospectus in general, “confirms Fairclough’s claim that the universities are indeed using a rhetoric which serves to promote the university in a highly competitive market to potential customers” (p. 739), yet Askehave does not explain how the testimonials work toward this goal beyond personalizing the text and creating a sense of atmosphere and trust.

This study examined the rhetoric of the similar form of profiles to determine how they work as a promotional genre. To do so, it first examined whether profiles in the context of university discourse constitute a genre at all, and if so, whether they also are a hybrid promotional genre as Fairclough claims, or a fully promotional genre, as Askehave argues. As any degree of promotional genre, profiles represent a continuing

shift in stable institutional identities, authority, and professional identities (Fairclough, 1995, p. 158). Understanding this shift, though, begins with a review of the story of the profile itself, including the somewhat contested nature of the form.

### *A Taxonomy of Profiles*

Like the figures in profiles, a review of the literature can only sketch a partial picture at this point, since research on the profile genre to date has only skimmed the surface of its features. However, in order to present multiple sides of the concept, the review includes examples of the form in biography, art, and journalism, beginning with the formal coining of the term. Although its first recorded use of profile as a written genre occurred around 1734, when Roger North used term to refer to sketches of men's lives (Clifford, 1962, p. 31), the concept has spanned portraits in art and contracted to specific contexts in journalism and public relations. Just as biography is not a monolithic term, partly because, according to Parke (1996, p. 29), life writing did not develop transhistorically, the profile also developed across these varied disciplines and contexts. The written manifestations of the profile carry visual connotations of a portrait, character sketch, or in the specific case of *The New Yorker*, an ironical or sideways glance.

### *The New Yorker Profile*

The founding editor of *The New Yorker*, Harold Ross, copyrighted the term, Profile, in 1926, one year after the inauguration of the magazine. The form still appears in its pages today, as well as in collections from writers and the current editor, David Remnick. In an anthology of these "life stories" Remnick (2001) defines the profile as "a

biographical piece—a concise rendering of a life through anecdote, incident, interview, and description (or some ineffable combination thereof)” (p. ix). Although the first *New Yorker* profiles or sketches pale in length and depth to current incarnations, Remnick picks exemplars from the decades, beginning with Alva Johnston’s profile on a phony Russian prince in 1932. Johnston refined the genre through what Remnick characterizes as a “natural wit and sense of storytelling with the legwork of a first-class newspaperman” (p. x). However, refined profiles in form could also be coarse profiles in content as Ross had no qualms using pieces as a means of starting or fueling feuds. Profiles, in particular, could maliciously cut through a person’s character. For his part as editor, Remnick unequivocally balances these profiles of malice with those about identity and those about the strangeness of fame (p. xi).

More recent examples of *The New Yorker* profile fill the pages of two collections from theatre critic John Lahr (2000, 2005). He also focuses on public faces with an aim to uncover their private lives and identity. In *Honky Tonk Parade*, Lahr calls his craft “pen portraits of theatricals” (p. 3). He expands on his previous definition, a list similar to Remnick’s above, by reflecting on the process of writing. In his words, “the profile is a literary juggling act, and harder than it might seem. Besides my own point of view, I’m trying to interpret the subject’s career, life, conversation, and cast of subsidiary characters who come into the story” (p. 3). For Lahr, the characters take center stage, much as his comedian father did through his childhood years. To him, writing is inquiry. As he explains, “A *New Yorker* profile is written, not transcribed. The aim is to fathom the subject by seeing him or her from as many angles as possible” (p. 3).

Both Remnick and Lahr define *The New Yorker* profile by the length of the process and the product, critiquing those pieces that adopt the profile moniker based on a half-hour interview or shallow journalism. For Lahr (2000), “A full *New Yorker* profile, which nowadays runs on average to ten thousand words, takes about four months to research and to write” (p. xii). During this time, he finds the pulse of an artist, something he can only calibrate against interviews with family, friends, and enemies. This investigation typically results in 1500 pages of interview notes, enough for a short biography, which is why Lahr attributes his journalistic method to literary biographers, such as Plutarch, Johnson, and Strachey (p. xii). Remnick (2001) also credits these historic figures, placing them ahead of Ross’s appropriation of the biographical form. If *The New Yorker* reinvented the profile, as Lahr claims in *Show and Tell*, then its inventors deserve some credit for the current forms profiles take.

#### Foundational Figures in Biography and Art

*The New Yorker* profile invokes Plutarch because he shared its conception of biography as life stories, and he, too, worked to refine the form in his own time of the first century. As Parke (1996) summarizes in her chronology of the biography genre, Plutarch distinguished biography from history. In Plutarch’s dichotomy, biographers write lives, not histories, a stance indicative in his major work, *Parallel Lives* (1998, 1999 translations). Plutarch outlined the biographer’s responsibility to method and genre, which evolved into the modern tenant of accurate facts (Parke, 1996, p. 15). As Nadel (1984) summarizes in another history of biography, Plutarch’s technique included a concentration on the illuminating incident, the use of substantial quotes, the use of topoi,

and an emphasis on description and evaluation (p. 17). He concludes that the moral purposes of Plutarch's biographies were to instruct, specifically through a focus on distinguishing traits (p. 17-18).

The genre continued to evolve through the writings of Samuel Johnson and his biographer James Boswell, who eventually penned *Life of Johnson* in 1791. The pair solidified the form, first through adherence to Plutarch's emphasis on facts, evident in Johnson's valued primary sources, and second in the interpretation of these materials to reveal a subject's character. Boswell (1790) took heed of the importance of everyday evidence as he diligently collected daily conversations to weave together his biography of Johnson. This focus still influences current definitions of the form, as evident in Parke's (1996) overview:

The biography of any individual thus inevitably becomes an account of the person in group settings, since human life is largely characterized by social interaction. Biography, a fundamentally social form, locates and defines its subjects in the presence of others, gathering and evaluating other people's accounts of the person as one of its major constitutive categories of evidence. (p. 114-115)

While many recognize Boswell's work of dedication as the first modern biography, Parke (1996) notes that the form has inspired without imitation (p. 17). In other words, the biography continued to evolve. In Victorian biography, writers focused on the accomplishments of subjects, more so in the emerging genre of collective biography (Nadel, 1984, p. 29; Parke, 1996, p. 115). As an example, Parke cites Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (2003), a collection of sketches or portraits about four "Victorian cultural

heroes” (Parke, 1996, p. 27). Strachey followed in Boswell’s footsteps by taking more artistic liberties with his pieces such as relying less on first-hand accounts and shortening the length of his pieces, particularly in one of his last publications, *Portraits in Miniature* (1931), originally titled *Victorian Silhouettes* (Nadel, 1984, p. 64). As this title indicates, the shorter biographical sketches share characteristics with their visual counterpart: the silhouette.

Named for Etienne de Silhouette, a French minister who enjoyed the pastime of cutting profiles, the silhouette represents an outline of a person. As Silhouette lost his popularity and position as controller general of French finances, his name was attached to everything skimpy, thus suggesting that the art form was “shadow without substance” (Oliver, 1977, p. xi). Previously, admirers used the term “shades” or “shadows” to describe the black and white contrast between the profiles and their backgrounds (DiCicco, 2001, p. 40). Over time, the silhouette moniker lost its negative connotation, and the art continued to thrive in France, particularly through the work of August Edouart, the same Frenchman who popularized the form in America. As Oliver chronicles in his collection of Edouart’s silhouettes, the immigrant traveled across the states cutting profiles, even in the face of competition from photography. Oliver notes the similarities between the two forms, where the “advantages claimed for silhouettes were precisely those later claimed for photography—cheapness, speed, accuracy, and the possibility of dispensing with art training” (p. xii). Yet, just as the founding figures of biography creatively altered the form, Edouart reinvented his method of cutting profiles. According to Parks’ (2006) chronology, Edouart refined the method because “he had an



uncanny ability to convey not only likeness but also posture and sense of character” (p. 125). In Edouart’s silhouettes, we are able to see more than just a dark outline.

Other artists added more embellishments to the silhouette figure, expanding its repertoire in American folk art, as outlined by DiCicco (2001). He describes the art form by size – three to four inches – and by its purpose as a luxury item. Specifically, he divides silhouettes into those that are simple, direct, and traditional and those that are imaginative and constitute a more developed form of folk expression, which is most obviously captured by “the puffy-sleeved artist” (p. 42). The silhouettes apparently took on more expressions in their details. Thus, DiCicco shows how the silhouette transitioned from “the earliest and most basic profile image, a contrast of black and white, through several stages, which included modest embellishment, to the point where the embellishment becomes more detailed and elegantly refined” (p. 46).

Yet this additional embellishment should not be confused with completeness of form or character. As a profile, any silhouette only shows a side of a person, and often only a side of their character. A modern silhouette artist, Kara Walker, plays up this characteristic of the form through a connection to stereotypes. As she states in several catalogs for her shows, “The silhouette says a lot with very little information, but that’s also what the stereotype does” (Halbreich, 2005). Both hone in on prominent features. In a review of Walker’s work, Parks (2006) latches onto this connection and traces it through several exhibits, while applauding Walker’s ability to suggest complexities for form and space in the traditional silhouette. Though Walker evokes attributes of 18<sup>th</sup> century silhouettes, her interpretations are usually much larger, often spanning entire

walls and creating a bizarre world according to Parks' review. Walker focuses on slavery and the antebellum South in most of her work, though more recent exhibits depict New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina (see Figure 1.1). No matter the subject, she creates “provocative – frequently incendiary – and racially-charged images,” according to Als (2007, p. 70), the author of a *New Yorker* profile on Walker's 13-year art career.



**Figure 1.1: Kara Walker (2007) book cover, titled "Burn"**

Whether visual or written, profiles share this appeal to emotions. Plutarch distinguished the biography because of its interpretive and sometimes emotional nature, and silhouette artists refined their craft to depict a sense of character and to invoke senses in their audience, as seen in Walker's exhibits. In addition, they both rely on narrative structures, as evident in Walker's wall-size stories (Als, 2007). Consequently, historians also account for interpretations of these forms. Nadel (1984) examines this process of biography, beginning with a criticism of passive readers, specifically those who view narrative transparently. They value the content more than the form, but he argues that “realizing that the narrative of a biography frames the subject and affects our vision provides us with a greater awareness of the complexity and richness of biographical form” (p. 3). He identifies a paradox which he calls “completeness by selectivity” (p. 3), a metaphor suited to the cuttings of silhouettes as well. If the artist did not select

prominent features, the figure would not be recognizable. Yet, with increasing selectivity and shortening in the case of written profiles, something must be left out or left behind.

### Descendents and Distortions

The selectivity of profiles in both art and biography is inherent of the form and based on their split from history and their continued evolution toward fiction. This selectivity also brings up several issues for writers and readers. Nadel (1984) identifies this myth in biography, since the form can never present an enclosed self (p. 180). In particular, interpretive narrators consciously select key moments. Thus, biographers rely on synecdoche, where a part stands for the whole, just as silhouette artists rely on prominent features. The aim of biography is a similar process of identification, where the aim of the biographer is to present an attitude or perspective of the facts. As Nadel summarizes “biography fulfills its analytic purpose through incompleteness, engaging the reader’s imagination in the task of evaluating the subject” (p. 208). Nadel also broaches the tension between fact and fiction, a subject prominent in Clifford’s (1962) edited collection. In *Biography as an Art*, he opens with a debate about whether biographers are craftsmen or artists (p. ix). In his conception of the written art form, selectivity is a matter of ethics, specifically about how much detail a biographer should reveal (p. xv). Benedict (1991) explains the paradox in the specific case of the profile. As she states, “Profile writers have the artistic license to recreate people, not to create them from scratch” (p. 2). She places journalists in a position of power, a similar stance to Lahr’s (2000, 2005) *New Yorker* examples. Due to the subjective nature of profiles, they constitute literal reviews of people.

Benedict (1991) compares a profile to an oil painting, where the full picture of a man is not only his portrait, but the setting and framing of it, through the all-important theme and lead of the piece. In addition, she outlines the elements of clarity, honesty, and style, and she harps on description, which “should be short, precise, and telling” (p. 16). She concludes with a rule of thumb: “if the subject unreservedly loves it, I have failed.... The best we can hope for is a shrug and a grudging admission that what we wrote was fair” (p. 17). According to Remnick’s (2001) account, Ross would have shared this admission in the earliest day of the iconic profile (xi). In other ways, however, the profile has moved away from this journalistic standard, and its appearance greatly depends on the rhetorical goals of the writer or artist. As Parke (1996) notes, all biographies are written to support cultural agendas (p. 11).

In a review of the rhetoric of profiles, Kaufer (2006) identifies two other variants, in addition to the standard *New Yorker* profile: the self-profile of cover letters and the classification profile. Each type of profile performs different cultural work. In a cover letter a writer provides a narrative to accompany a resume; in a descriptive or *New Yorker* profile a writer brings out the complexities of human life; and in the classification profile writers construct individual sketches around a theme. In other words, these three types of profiles differ in their levels of uniqueness or adherence to a stereotype, where cover letters highlight uniqueness of a coveted employee and classificatory profiles categorize persons as types. Because this third type of profile typically centers on achievement and accomplishment, Kaufer is able to analyze personal profiles written about Indian Americans for signs of a model minority ethnic identity.

As the profile becomes more narrowly focused on achievement, as exemplified in Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* (1974) or in Kaufer's sub-category of people-on-the-move, it also distorts the all-encompassing intent of biography and the *New Yorker* ideal. This journalistic form capitalizes on the selectivity of the profile by highlighting promotions or advancement. Kaufer categorizes this type of profile as "public relations more than personal acquaintance, a way of extending credit to the companies and regions whose economic agility and nimbleness have provided the wherewithal to hire and advance people on the move" (p. 765). Benedict (1991) describes less rigorous endeavors similarly as "public relations fluff," especially if they do not seek outside sources to achieve balance (p. 12). However, in certain situations such as company newsletters or other targeted publications, these shorter, more focused profiles may fit.

**Table 1.1: A Comparison of Profiles**

<i>Profile Type</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
<b>Visual</b>	An outline of an object or a person as seen from one side; a silhouette	To share with intimate friends and family
<b>Written</b>	A short biographical sketch or character study, particularly of a public figure	To invite readers to learn about a person
<i>New Yorker</i>	A substantial sidelong and ironical glance at a subject through a wide lens or many angles	To expose the public and private self
Descriptive	A general description of a subject through sensory details, spatial context, and dialogue	To invite acquaintance with a subject
Self-Profile	An autobiographical narrative most often used as a cover letter for resumes	To sell qualifications, experiences, or skills to a potential employer
Classificatory	An individual sketch as a variation on a common theme or a class of a particular type	To classify people according to a common theme
Public Relations	A narrowly focused sketch detailing achievements of people or organizations	To promote or extend credit to the company or region

### ***Profiles in Context***

The less exhaustive profiles in terms of research and length, such as those identified as classificatory or public relations (see Table 1.1), still meet the basic definition of the form. Like biography, they narrate individual lives, no matter what extent of conciseness. Like silhouettes, they might merely be an outline of outstanding, even stereotypical, characteristics. Profiles work at any level of detail because people fascinate people, a common claim from writers who wish to elevate the shortened form

(Bernhart, 1999, p. 4; Whitman, 1992, p. 9). For example, in *The Investigative Reporters and Editors Journal*, Bernhart provides tips for young writers, including expanding the search to the context, searching for writings and testimony, adding travel details, looking at the timeline of key events, and asking broad questions, specifically about emotions and motivations. Whitman also offers advice to beginning profile writers, suggesting that “The beauty of profiles lies in the many different ways you can slant them” (p. 10). Like many writers, she aims for the celebrity pitch to national publications, but she also works at the local level by recommending the alumni magazine pitch. In this type of publication, she suggests the chronological approach to include information about where the person came from, what she is doing now, what she hopes to accomplish, etc. Consequently, the profile becomes a form of university promotional discourse, the subject of this study.

Keiger (2006) offers more pointed advice to editors of alumni magazines and the writers who submit profiles to their pages. He calls for a re-energizing of the content, accomplished by turning writers loose to be storytellers so they can find the “oh wow” factor. Like Remnick (2001), Keiger chides those writers who “did not spend enough time with the subject, did not talk to enough people, did not ask enough questions, did not read the research, did not read the book, did not hang around the event for three extra hours” (p. 3). His second piece of advice is to embrace *copia*, or to see the subject from as many angles as possible. He offers the following scenario:

Let’s say you are writing a profile, about an alumnus who is a painter. Go watch him paint. Watch him teach a drawing class. Watch him schmooze customers at the opening of a show of his latest work. Go to his house, go to his studio, go out

to lunch. Meet his students, meet his teachers, meet his fellow painters, meet his wife, meet his kids, meet the dog. View him from as many perspectives as you can, and talk to as many different people as you can get to get *their* perspectives.

Hold the man up to the light and turn him every which way. (Keiger, 2006, p. 4)

Even with this traditional, *New Yorker*-esque advice, Keiger (2006) also recognizes new forms of profiles, using his own example of writing linear notes for a CD for an alumnus who was the founder of a rock 'n' roll band. He suggests further incarnations will break the mold in other ways, by taking the point of view of a tumor in a medical story or using a comic strip as the form to tell the story. Though somewhat removed from the profiles that have risen from the pages of *The New Yorker*, the local manifestations of profiles in university publications and on university websites offer a more accessible site of study, where the profile can be seen as both public discourse and an emerging genre, possibly retaining remnants of prior manifestations in other contexts.

Conceptualizing the profile as promotional discourse, however, does not limit it to language alone. Even as a written form, it carries visual connotations of a portrait, character sketch, or in the specific case of *The New Yorker*, “something sidelong and ironical” (Remnick, 2001, p. ix). Fairclough’s (1995) definition of discourse allows for this multimodality, as he extends language use to include semiotic modalities such as photography (p. 131). In addition, he distinguishes discourses or “ways of signifying areas of experience from a particular perspective” and genres or “uses of language associated with particular socially ratified activity types such as the job interview or scientific papers” (p. 132). If profiles have become used in different contexts, then an



analysis at the genre level will reveal their prominent features and more importantly lead to a better understanding of their communicative purpose within university discourse.

### *Questions about Features and Purpose*

The profile as a visual or verbal sketch of a person or figure relies on prominent features to convey its subject. However, as seen in the various types of profiles, these features can fill out a 10,000 word article in the pages of the *New Yorker* or be cut to a more svelte form depending on the context of publication. The standard profile, as a complete portrait of a person, typically includes interviews with the subject, her life history, description of her person, home, or workplace, interviews with close subjects, critics, and enemies, and a theme that has some sort of symbolic value (Benedict, 1991). Shorter profiles, categorized as classificatory or public relations above, provide a snapshot of a life rather than a full length portrait. These profiles may incorporate some or all of Benedict's, Lahr's, and Remnick's ingredients, but they also have other features and goals, as seen in both Kaufer's (2006) study of classificatory profiles and Askehave's (2007) study of self-profiles, which she calls testimonials. Though both of these studies greatly expand the repertoire of profiles, they leave unanswered questions about the intersection of the profile as used in university discourse, which was the focus of this investigation. The two main questions center on the features and purpose of profiles:

1. What are the common features, textual or visual patterns, or, in linguistic terms, the move structures of profiles published on university undergraduate admissions websites?

2. What is the communicative purpose of these profiles, and how does it reveal or relate to the marketization of university discourse?

The subject, in this case, was students, specifically undergraduate students, rather than alumni or celebrities of journalism texts. Their stories, as displayed on university websites, also differed from the testimonials in Askehave's study of university prospectuses. The chosen texts stand alone and feature first- and third-person accounts. Though first-person is typical of testimonials, profiles have more than one voice. As Whitman (1993) elaborates, "The writer arranges, condenses, describes, explains; the subject speaks in a loud, clear voice.... No matter what a subject or writer says, editors always get the last word" (p. 12). Kaufer (2006) factors in editorial input as he delves into reasons for the model minority ethnic identity in the profiles of his study, and in doing so he finds that editorial mission and regional history of the publication matter. Since universities publish profiles of students, the editorial mission ties into organizational communication, conceptualized through the notion of the sponsoring organization, explained in more detail in Chapter 2. This next chapter expands understanding of the profile form through the notion of genre theory and its defining feature of communicative purpose, an addition that explains how organizational texts realize the institutional identity that is crucial to Fairclough's marketization of university discourse. Through an analysis of both the text and context, as approached in Chapter 3 and as undertaken in Chapter 4, genre focuses attention on the patterns in profiles and the patterns surrounding their use. The result is more than an outline of a subject. The analysis reveals the accomplishments of profiles, both in terms of what they do within university discourse

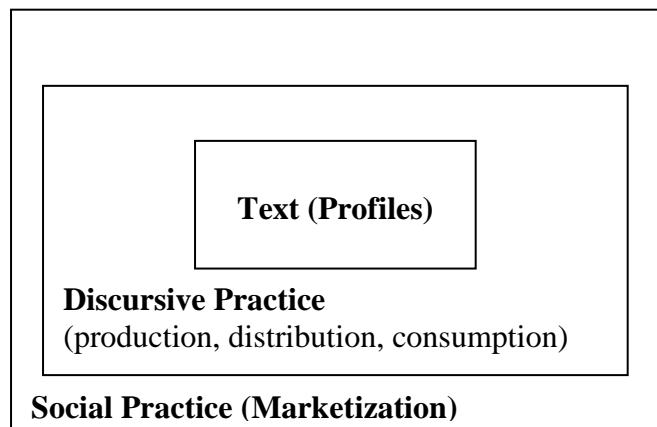
and what writers do to constitute the best practices of the genre. This conclusion and its implications are the subject of Chapter 5.

## Chapter 2

### THE SITUATION OF UNIVERSITY DISCOURSE

A classification of discourse will be rhetorically sound if it contributes to an understanding of how discourse works—that is, if it reflects the rhetorical experience of people who create and interpret the discourse. (Miller, “Genre as Social Action,” p. 152)

This study defines the genre of the student profile by first exploring the rhetorical situation of university discourse and the communicative purpose of the marketization of this discourse, in an effort to ground the textual analysis of Chapters 3 and 4 in a larger social practice. Fairclough (1995) also situates texts within the larger social practice of marketization as shown in the following diagram, adapted for the situation of university discourse (see Figure 2.1).



**Figure 2.1 : Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Concept of Discourse (1993, p. 73)**

Fairclough's middle step of discursive practice or intertextual analysis shows "how texts selectively draw upon *orders of discourse* – the particular configurations of conventionalized practices (genres, discourses, narratives, etc.) which are available to text producers and interpreters in particular social orders" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 188). Devitt (2004) also places genres in this mediating position. As she sees it, genre is "a nexus between an individual's actions and a socially defined context.... Genre is visible in classification and form, relationships and patterns that develop when language users identify different tasks as being similar" (p. 31). Analyzing the profile at the level of genre, then, accounts for textual similarities and contextual similarities. This three-dimensional approach, as Fairclough characterizes it, lifts the profile from the page and offers a more holistic approach to the text. The result is a rhetorical understanding of the profile genre, based on its corresponding situation and its communicative purpose. As Fairclough notes, analysts must oscillate between the texts and orders of discourse, so later chapters reverse the process taken in this chapter by analyzing the texts to draw conclusions about the social practices of university discourse.

Genre theory establishes a much wider frame for the profile than previous histories or analyses, and as the overarching theoretical framework for this study, it mirrors those studies of the form undertaken by Askehave (2007) and Kaufer (2006). As one genre scholar explains, rather than investigating static texts, genre accounts for change in contexts, "by viewing *genre metaphorically as a frame* in which social action can unfold" (Lassen, 2006, p. 505). The lynchpin of social action stems from Miller's (1984) conception of genre as social action. Specifically, she argues that "a rhetorically

sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (p. 151). However, the form of the discourse remains the first of her three constituents of a genre. In addition to formal similarities depicted chronologically in Chapter 1, a genre has similarities of all the elements in the rhetorical situation, the subject of this chapter, and a shared pragmatic component, a construct approached in Chapter 3. Thus, genre theory connects the features of the profile to the theory of marketization. Genre cannot be individual, according to Devitt (2004), or private, according to Miller (1984). To constitute a genre, the student profiles published by universities must share common features in both form and situation.

### ***Recurrent Situations and Forms***

The rhetorical situation, a key component of genre theory, invites and defines discourse, so in the case of the profile as university discourse, the theory of marketization would define the features of the genre. However, additions to the theory of the rhetorical situation note a dialogic relationship between the text and the context, allowing the discourse to equally define the situation and for textual features to provide evidence of the marketization of university discourse. Bitzer (1968) offered the initial definition of the rhetorical situation as “a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance,” and in many cases the utterance is necessary to complete the activity (p. 4). Within this complex situation, he defines three constituents: the exigence or imperfection, the audience to be persuaded, and the constraints which influence the rhetor. Of most concern for genre theory is the exigence,

which Bitzer describes as “an imperfection marked by an urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (p. 6). Other rhetorical scholars critique Bitzer’s rhetorical situation for its reliance on the pre-existing or foundational exigence. Vatz (1973) argues that such exigencies may lie with the rhetor. In other words, the rhetor may create the exigence, as seen in marketing when an organization attempts to shape their audience and then deliver their message. As Vatz conceives the relationship, situations are rhetorical; utterance strongly invites exigence; rhetoric controls the situational response; and situations obtain their character from the rhetoric that creates them (p. 159). Consigny (1974) mediates the two sides through a dichotomy of control versus creation. By combining the two approaches, he shows how “the rhetor cannot create exigencies arbitrarily, but must take into account the particularities of each situation in which he actively becomes engaged” (p. 176).

In the case of organizational discourse that is the focus of this study, one of the particularities is the organization itself. From the perspective of the organizational or institutional author, Debs (1993) argues for an expansion of the situation to include the sponsoring organization. As she reasons, “if a writer negotiates a text within an organization, the choices that arise from the organization’s own character or past experience will be most persuasive. If the writer speaks for an organization to an external audience, he or she must fulfill the expectations developed in the audience by previous organizational spokespersons” (p. 165). These expectations lead to conventional or recurrent forms. Organizational consultant Johns (1989) compares this recurrence of form to the reproductive nature of the file cabinet. Her main claim is that even in different

settings, people face the same writing problems and they solve them in similar ways (p. 154). Communicators tend to perpetuate the same models from their experience in work or in school, and changing these familiar models requires a willingness to take risks. Miller (1984) rearticulates this common occurrence. In her summary of the rhetorical situation, we have conventional forms “because they arise in situations with similar structures and elements and because rhetors respond in similar ways, having learned from precedent what is appropriate and what effects their actions are likely to have on other people” (p. 152).

This recurrence of form does not limit the opportunity for evolution or emergence of form, which can be evidence of or a force in social change as well, such as the emergence of marketization of university discourse that is the focus of this study. Devitt (2004) moves in this direction when she advances a view that each situation is unique (p. 25). Furthermore, she expands the generic situation to include the context of culture and the context of genres themselves, a form of intertextuality advocated by Fairclough (2003) and Bazerman (2004a). In Devitt’s delineation of the connections, culture refers to “a shared set of material contexts and learned behaviors, values, beliefs, and templates” (p. 26), and genres are those things we have read or written. In other words, genres respond not only to recurrent situations, but also to other antecedents, contextual forces, and individual choices (p. 122). Devitt compares the visible results to tree rings, where changes in form reveal cultural changes (p. 101). However, she also notes the recursive nature of genres and situations, a stance explained by Bawarshi (2000). Bawarshi concludes that “the genre function does not simply precede independently of us but is



rather something we reproduce as we function within it” (p. 355). Thus, he also provides a revision of Miller’s (1984) foundational definition: “Rather than being rhetorical actions ‘based’ in recurrent situations, genres are both rhetorical actions *and* recurrent situations” (Bawarshi, 2000, p. 357; see also Pare & Smart, 2004, p. 153-154). As a result, the situation becomes an equally important marker or maker of a genre. In this case of university discourse, it provides a context to define texts for analysis. The texts, in turn, provide observable textual features that realize and reinforce the situation.

### ***Issues of Marketization and Identification***

For universities, the situation includes larger issues of marketization, thus expanding the constraints from the single organization to the surrounding context of higher education. As universities adopt means of ordinary business, they increasingly focus on their mission, their brand, or their identity, and their publications reflect this marketing or public relations movement. For example, Lowrie (2007) examines how universities create their identities, while working with the language of higher education policy and their marketing activities. He finds that a logic of difference in respect to a plurality of identities is a necessary condition of branding higher education; that the construction of a higher education brand identity is also the construction of other identities for higher education; and that the appeal of a brand identity to a target audience is also an antagonistic appeal to the diverse audiences made different in respect to the particular brand (p. 990). In an overview of corporate branding, Leitch and Motion (2007) draw upon the work of Foucault to explore this “neglected tension” (p. 71). While

their notion of corporate brands starts with products rather than the overall organization, Leitch and Motion determine that normalization is a powerful aspect of corporate branding—corporations try to differentiate themselves, but, at the same time, must stay within the established norms. As the authors state, “Only corporate brands that operate within discourse norms will be accepted as ‘truth’” (p. 75). Furthermore, in establishing brand meaning, organizations also establish what brands do not mean. For universities, this dichotomy would lead to a conclusion similar to Lowrie’s study, in which he determines that “higher education brand identities attempt to restrict audiences and use to a particular identity that replicates across the institutional landscape” (p. 999).

In this modern and sometimes postmodern conception of identity, public relations, advertising, and marketing play a central role. Within these traditionally external communication frameworks, identity is “the question of what the organization ‘is’ or ‘stands for’ or ‘wants to be’” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 232). Corporations become persons with their own identities and the ability to act in rhetorical situations; thus expanding Bitzer’s (1968) notion of the rhetorical situation to include a constituent of the corporation itself or a corporate sponsor in Debs’ (1993) articulation of the addition. Cheney and Christensen find that when externally directed communication becomes an integral part of the organization’s operating discourse, an organization is essentially “auto-communicating” or communicating with itself (p. 246). Thus, their theory of organizational auto-communication blurs the boundaries between internally focused organizational communication and externally focused public relations. In Cheney and Christensen’s collapsing of the two sides, organizations use internal campaigns for

external purposes, particularly when organizations start to consider employees as customers, or in the case of universities, when students become consumers, as posited by Fairclough (1995).

Cheney (1983) laid the groundwork for the theory of auto-communication through an earlier examination of strategies of identification in organizational newsletters. In this study, he provides an illuminating example of how textual features can be evidence of organization identity or attempts at identification, a concept Burke (1962) introduced to move away from persuasion as the key term for rhetoric. As two people or a person and an organizational persona communicate, they identify with one another. In Burke's explication, "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are or is persuaded to believe so" (p. 544). In other words, identification rests on perceived similarities or shared interests. Heath (1992) defines the term in the context of public relations of this study: "Identification is a rhetorical means by which people realize that they share opinions on matters of self-interest" (p. 45). In the case of Cheney's house organs, these rhetorical means include attempt to establish common ground, to create identification through antithesis, or to rely on an assumed "we" (p. 148). In particular, the common ground technique features people-on-the-move, a pseudo-profile type. Recent studies reveal such elements in corporate press releases (Maat, 2007), international prospectuses (Askehave, 2007), and personal profiles (Kaufer, 2006). They hint at and extend Cheney's classification system,

showing that the realization of promotional features depends on the individual institution and the overall form and style of the texts.

Other implementations of universities' identities include corporate identity programs to reinvent themselves and to develop an edge over their competitors (Melewar & Akel, 2005, p. 41). This identity impetus in higher education contributes to marketization of academic discourse, as further explained by Osman (2008). Through an examination of the rebranding of several Malaysian universities, he focuses Fairclough's (1995) notion of marketization on the image and identity of the institution by categorizing the brochures of the universities as a corporate genre or public relations (p. 60), an important step toward this more focused analysis of the profile genre. In addition, examining the profiles as a genre of public relations allowed for an analysis of both their tactical form and their motivation or underlying strategy. As Courtright and Smuddle (2009) posit, "a motivational approach to genre brings strategy to the fore, capitalizing on the structural approaches concern for form and combining it with a focus on content – both within the context of the message's purpose and the situation it was designed to address" (p. 139). Starting with the situation of the marketization of university discourse also helps define a corpus of student profiles for analysis of the structure and content.

### ***Institutional Identities and Sponsoring Organizations***

This study took the public relations perspective as a starting point by pulling texts from schools recognized by their peers for excellence through the Council of Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). CASE awards medals for programs in

alumni relations, advancements services, communications and marketing, and fundraising, and their category of individual student recruitment publications references profiles as key component (2004). Although the publications on the 2008 do not single out profiles as a component, the publishing organizations are institutions that obviously invest in their marketing efforts, particularly to prospective students. Moreover, each text fits a similar rhetorical situation at the most abstract level, even if the situations are unique for each organization. In 2008, the student recruitment publication awards single out a diverse list of sponsoring institutions in the United States:

- Carnegie Mellon University – a private, research university in the northeast with an undergraduate population of 5,850
- Middlebury College – a private, liberal arts college in the rural northeast with an undergraduate population of 2,500
- College for Creative Studies – a private, fine arts college in the north with an undergraduate population of 1,300
- Mills College – a private, liberal arts, women’s college in the west with an undergraduate population of 972
- North Carolina State University – a large, public land-grant institution in the southeast with an undergraduate population of 24,000

These basic institutional identities impact efforts to market and promote their products and services to consumers or students, as theorized in the overarching strategy of identification. Moreover, as sponsoring organizations, these institution help to define the texts for analysis. This method of corpus selection and sampling follows Devitt’s (2004)

and Miller's (1984) understanding of genre as social action by asking producers to identify the profiles. Swales (1990) also demarcates how a discourse community's nomenclature for genres is an important source of insight, but he cautions that naming conventions may be more stable than the genres they describe (p. 54-55; see also Tench, 2003, p. 141), an issue for further consideration in the analysis chapter.

### *Corpus Selection and Sampling*

For genre analysis in particular, Bazerman (2004b) offers guidelines for defining a corpus that is substantial but manageable, what he calls the "point of diminishing returns" (p. 327). At this point, which varies by the scope of each study, adding more texts will not provide additional insight into their use. Since the scope of this analysis of profiles is limited, the corpus remains small, with texts drawn from five universities in the United States. However, to increase the representativeness of the texts, each was selected through maximum variation sampling. Specifically, each was selected by a simple random sample of three texts from each university or college that placed in CASE's category of Individual Student Recruitment Publications in 2008. These representative examples should provide evidence of how profiles are being used or adapted in the context of university marketization, particularly at those institutions that appear to be doing something that works to attract students' attention. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest maximum variation sampling to build a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon. As they state, "In maximum variation sampling, the researcher simply seeks to find exemplars of a wide range of characteristics" (p. 123). This "purposeful

sampling” corresponds to the scope of the project, the complexity of the research problem, the accessibility of the texts, and other issues of time and resources (p. 122).

Within the six U.S. universities and colleges on the CASE (2008) award list for individual student recruitment publications, three institutions named and displayed profiles on their homepage or undergraduate admission page. Two institutions placed student stories on their admissions website as identified through a keyword search of “student profiles.” Only one of the six schools did not display or name profiles on their recruitment site. Pilot tests of the term through a general search engine and through a national ranking of universities determined that universities consistently self-identified their profiles through the common label, though the results ranged from autobiographical print and video testimonials to alumni publications. This more focused search of recruitment publications limited the results to online texts, although one school supplemented the written profile with a video testimonial. Some schools identified individual stories by a student’s name or by their program of study, though all opened to a complete list or display of entries from which three were selected using a table of random numbers. The result was a sample of 15 texts drawn from a common situation. The analysis of their form is the subject of the next two chapters.

## Chapter 3

### TWO APPROACHES TO TEXTS

Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed. Genres shape the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact. Genres are the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar. (Bazerman, "Life of Genre," p. 19)

In a rhetorical conception of genre, communicative purpose defines the genre.

Linguist John M. Swales (1990) agrees with this focus. In his definition, communicative purpose connects discourse communities, genres, and tasks:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. The purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. (Swales, 1990, p. 58)

However important the concept may be to genre studies, it proves difficult to operationalize, so researchers turn to the schematic structure of the discourse through analysis of form and content. Kaufer (2006) exemplifies this approach to the personal profiles in his study. As he explains, "When we want to understand an aggregate of 'typical situations' or trends across situations that a large collection of texts help define,



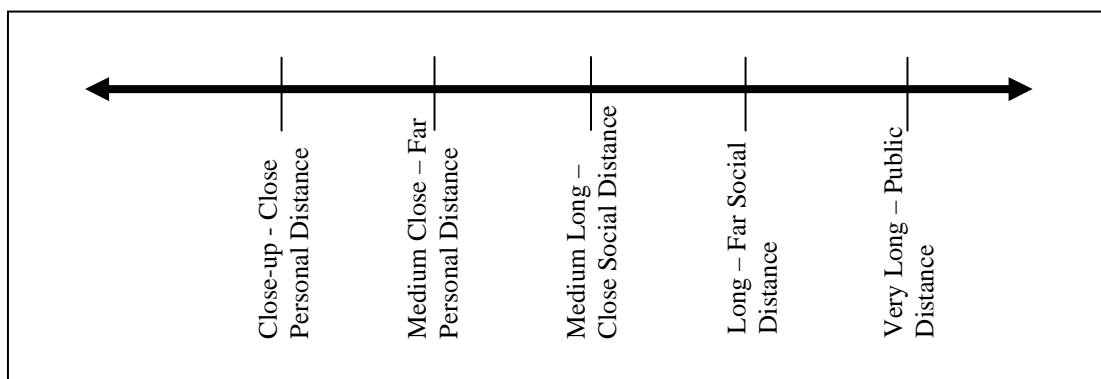
we can isolate, code and analyze textual features as a way of gaining access to the situations they help typify” (p. 762). He aggregates elements of form and content to identify promotional elements in relation to the concept of a model minority ethnic identity. This study will maintain this genre-based approach by revisiting the visual form and narrative structure of the profile as it relates to the concept and context of the marketization of university discourse. The methods encompass a two-fold approach to the visual form and the narrative form.

### ***Visual Form***

Traditionally, the visual form of a profile depicts a person’s face from the side. The representation is both detailed and sparse, often no more than a shade, shadow, or silhouette relying on prominent features to give a sense of character. For this study of profiles, however, the images are more diverse in size and shape, requiring a more extensive vocabulary for description. Given modern technology, they are photographs, rather than cuttings. Though these images supplement the written profiles that were the focus of analysis, they are an important component to the overall meaning of the text and provide visual clues about the overall message or purpose. The visual design also encompasses other components of the text that do not fit into the written form, such as the overall composition of the page, which essentially frames the text. These visual patterns suggest the genre status of a text, according to Wysocki (2004), who argues that the presentation of a page or screen gives an immediate sense of the genre (p. 123).

Additional visual elements can include colors, shapes, and typography, as well as details in the images such as viewing distance and angle.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) provide a grammar for discussing these connections as well as interpreting their purpose. In an analysis of images, they suggest that patterns of distance can become conventional in visual genres. For example, in television interviews, close-ups feature subjects revealing their feelings, mimicking more intimate face-to-face conversation than the long-shot typically used in diagrams that are more informational. They distinguish three distances and differing social relations: the close distance depicting a person's shoulders and face engages the viewer; the middle distance which shows a body from the knees up shows depicts something in full or within reach but not in use; and the long distance or full body shot creates an invisible barrier between viewer and object. In all, they describe five positions on a scale of personal distance to public distance, a continuum that matches the blurred boundaries between private and public organizations assumed in this study (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1: Kress and van Leeuwen's description of social distance (p. 130-131)**

The angle of an image constitutes the “point of view” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 135). A photo viewed from a frontal angle establishes involvement, while an oblique angle depicts detachment or otherness. This otherness also comes through the gaze in images according to Sturken and Cartwright (2001). Gaze through images and camera angles can contribute to a feeling of the exotic, since subjects are identified as a category of people, or the “other” (p. 103). Thus, the angle of an image works to establish powerful relationships, the focus of Sturken and Cartwright’s analysis. In Kress and van Leeuwen’s reading, vertical angles relate to power, where a high angle makes a subject look small, and a low angle makes it look imposing (p. 146). The angle of an image also relates to traditional notion of profiles, which, if taken from the side view, correspond to the oblique angle in Kress and van Leeuwen’s terms. Though conceived as a means to depict familiarity or personal closeness, the side angle of silhouettes in particular implies a distance or incompleteness. Yet, given the impetus of written profiles to show many angles of a person, a more direct, frontal approach may better meet the communicative goals of universities and correspond to, rather than oppose, the verbal elements of a text.

Finally, the composition invokes framing to disconnect or connect elements together, signifying a sense of belonging (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p.183). A lack of framing can also signify relationships between objects in a composition. In particular, framing applies to the images accompanying the written profiles in this study. Like a standard picture frame, visual cues often separate images as a separate unit from the text. Framing also occurs within images through lines in the background, for example. These lines provide structure between texts and images. However, the images alone can provide

the first clues about the purpose of a student profile. Even if an image does not depict a sideways glance in the traditional sense, its presentation might reveal other selective representations of character. These patterns begin to tell the story of profiles in the context of university discourse, though the full story lies in the textual patterns, the written structure, and the narrative form.

### *Narrative Form*

As delineated in Chapter 1, profiles narrate a person's life, even in visual or abbreviated textual forms. Theoretically, the narrative form works because people enjoy a good story. However, the form must adhere to certain conventions. In a rhetorical conception of narrative, stemming from Fisher's (1984) articulation of narration as the human paradigm, the form must have an ordered plot and consistency of characters and action, while the content must be believable based on past experiences. Public relations theory recognizes further constraints and potentials of the narrative form. Storytelling constrains discourse into a form of story and can restrict the reader from engaging in an argument, as Porter (1992) claims in his analysis of television advertisements. In other ways, the narrative form engages readers by requiring them to finish the story or evaluate the subject, as Nadel (1984) claims in his criticism of biography. According to Gilpin (2008), news releases also implicitly ask readers to complete a story. Yet even in a state of crises or confusion, news releases represent "the narrative voice of the organization as unified social actor" (p. 11), a feature that connects to prior discussions of identity and strategies of identification. Firat and Christensen (2005) share this opinion as they posit

that as the organization loses control, consistency, and predictability, receivers are no longer passive targets; instead, they are active agents in the construction of meaning and, in the marketization framework in this study, in the construction of brand meanings as well (p. 224). Gilpin conceptualizes the news release as an autobiographical narrative, a close relation to the biographical profiles of this study. News releases inscribe narratives about events, profiles inscribe narratives about people; yet, they also leave work for the reader and provide another text to study the organization's actions on an individual basis. The same methods apply in both cases as well, so this study incorporates a method of move structure analysis used in previous studies of the news release genre and the international student prospectus genre. For this study of profiles, moves in the text form the biographical narrative.

According to Swales (2004), "A move in genre analysis is a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse.... At one extreme, it can be realized by a clause; at the other by several sentences. It is a functional, not a formal, unit" (p. 228). Swales conceives moves as flexible in terms of linguistic realization. The existence, appearance, and any markers of a move depend on the genre and more specifically on the communicative purpose of the genre. A text-based approach to a genre can catalog the moves to posit the existence and structure of a genre in order to make conclusions about its communicative purpose. For example, in public relations genre research, Tench (2003) develops an applied model of six communicative moves for the news release genre, in order:

1. Introduce the offer/subject

2. Establish credentials of the organization or product
3. Expand on the offer/topic
4. Enclose documents
5. Solicit response
6. Offer information and contact details.

In part, these recognizable moves stem from journalist training and the five questions of who, what, when, where, and why. Trench determines their presence through word choice and design choices in the text, where a bold headline introduces the subject, the first paragraph provides credentials, followed by details in subsequent paragraphs, and a solicitation or contact details in the final sentence or paragraph. Based on this obligatory structure, Trench posits that these moves work toward the overall goal of communicating information about an event or an organizational development (p. 143). Once identified, the move structure provides a format for new writers learning the genre and a convention for viewers interpreting the news releases.

Lassen (2006) also examines the move structure of the press release. Taking linguistic features as an entry point to the text, she focuses on cohesive elements or semantic relations such as conjunctions to analyze the staging of the discourse. In her definition, the staging combines obligatory and non-obligatory stages, each characterized by rhetorical features. By distinguishing the form from the content, she concludes that the press release is a genre by form through similar move structure, but is not a genre by communicative purpose or content (p. 527). She argues that the press release is a media-channel rather than a genre. These revisions and additional terms expand genre theory.

Organizational communication scholars Yates and Orlikowski (1992) define the dichotomy, where “form refers to the observable physical and linguistic features of the communication,” and substance refers to “the social motives, themes, and topics being expressed in the communication” (p. 301). They further divide form into structural features, communication medium, and language or symbol system. Thus, communication medium factors into the form, complicating Lassen’s (2006) conclusions about the press release as a media-channel. Lassen notes this overlap, suggesting that the press release can be seen as a genre when viewed at the broad level of form.

The situation of the written profile as communicated on university websites provides a similar site of study, though the communicative medium of the web was not the main focus of this study, except as part of its form, as defined by Yates and Orlikowski (1992). The focal point in this study was the communicative purpose or function of the profile as expressed in the textual form. Kaufer (2006) uses this integration to establish procedures distinguishing the types of profiles based on their move structure expressed in verbs and content focus expressed in nouns and sensory adjectives, while Askehave (2007) offers an example of a staging structure closer to the profiles in this study through her analysis of international student prospectuses. Through a comparison of four instances of the genre, she establishes consistency of text organization, what she names an obligatory move structure. Through a second in-depth analysis, she explores the rhetorical features, exemplifying Swales’ focus on the rhetorical function as a marker of moves. The conventionalized repertoire for the prospectus genre includes a less ordered set of moves (p. 728):

- Identification of sender
- Description of university
- Description of course/degrees
- Description of destination
- Practical information
- Contact information

In addition to these core moves, Askehave identifies supplementary moves found in some but not all of the texts. Given the shared rhetorical situation between the prospectuses and Askehave's identified sub-genre of testimonials, any of these moves could appear in full or abbreviated instances in the profiles of this study. As Askehave notes, "identical genres will include a somewhat identical move structure, which divides the text into several functionally distinct stages or steps" (p. 728). Similarly, related genres, such as the promotional genres of the news release and the prospectus, will share moves.

Following Fairclough's theory of marketization, profiles would constitute a hybrid or fully promotional genre if they share "much of their communicative purposes, lexicogrammatical structure, and move structure with 'classic' promotional genres such as advertisements and sales promotions letters" (Maat, 2007, p. 62).

Maat (2007) broadens promotional statements beyond specific genres and those phrases that reference the company. As he explains, "It only needs to support certain conclusions that are positive for the company" (p. 68). In his study of news releases, promotional elements can be left out without affecting the sentence grammatically, such as excluding an adjective. Alternately, they could be replaced with a weaker element. In



other words, for a corporate genre such as the profile to fit the concept of promotional discourse inherent to the marketization of universities, it would need to display a promotional slant, an angle that reveals more than the individual subject. As promotional discourse, it would reflect favorably on the organization, its people, or its location. Essentially, its design would sell the university to potential students or consumers, and its move structure would construct a narrative with the same communicative purpose.

### *Summary of Methods*

The methods of visual analysis and narrative analysis focus on salient characteristics of images and narrative moves to posit patterns and similarities across texts. This study identified a move on two different systems, a linguistic indication of a move, as exemplified in public relations genre studies, and a rhetorical indication of a move determined in relation to the text and to other texts and genres. Following the visual nature of the profile genre, the layout aids the identification process. Headings, textboxes, bullet points, and paragraphs distinguish moves within a text. A further distinguishing feature for the moves in this study is their promotional function. In general, promotional moves advance the organization to its publics through specific favorable word choice or through an overall sketch of the organization's identity, a feature that connects to the rhetorical situation of university discourse of Chapter 2 and differentiates the student profiles from their long lineage in Chapter 1, as summarized in the final chapter.

## Chapter 4

### DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

And the linguistic impact is beginning to show: we do not *teach* courses to *students*; we *sell* courses to *clients* and we write texts which draw upon textual, visual and design features widely used in advertising and promotional material. (Askehave, “The Impact of Marketization,” p. 725).

A description and analysis of our sample of 15 profiles answers two research questions developed from the overview of profile types and a rhetorical understanding of genre status:

1. What are the common features, textual or visual patterns, or move structures of profiles published on university undergraduate admissions websites?
2. What is the communicative purpose of these profiles, and how does it reveal or relate to the marketization of university discourse?

To achieve genre status in this context, the profiles, as users label them, must share formal similarities and similarities within their rhetorical situations, as established in Chapter 2. This combination of form and function provides a rhetorical understanding of genre as social action. In addition, it requires an integration of content and form – what is said, and how it is said, both in images and in words, builds the move structure of a text. The structures or patterns are the focus of this qualitative analysis, which describes the profile as used in university discourse, particularly in relation to the traditional discourse of the visual and written genre of the silhouette and profile types. To draw conclusions about its communicative purpose, the study also examines the intertextuality of the

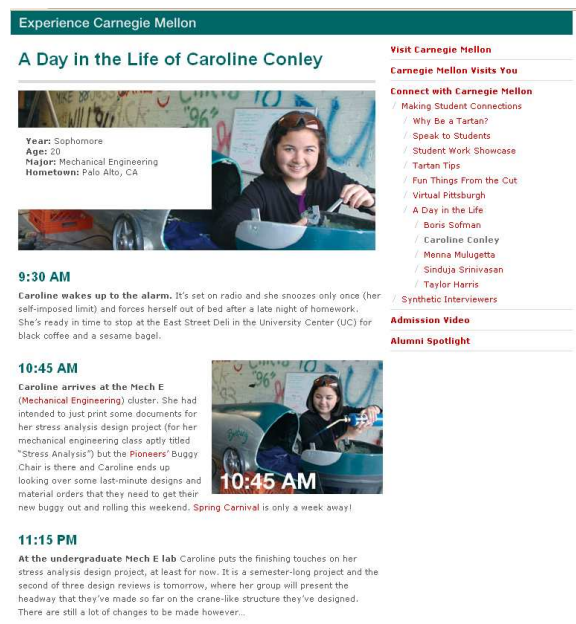
profile as it connects to other promotional and non-promotional genres. The mediating step of intertextuality allows for synthesis across the texts from each institution as well as a summary across the five institutions selected for analysis. The examples below provide a reference point for the visual and narrative analyses later in the chapter (see the Appendix for the full sample).

### *Description*

The profiles feature three main components distinguished by framing: quick facts about the student, at least one image of the student, and body text. The image always appears at the top of the screen, with the quick facts visually connected through overlapping frames or similar color scheme. The display of these elements depends on the institution's format, as explained in each example. In addition, the brief descriptions note any distinguishing features of the profiles.

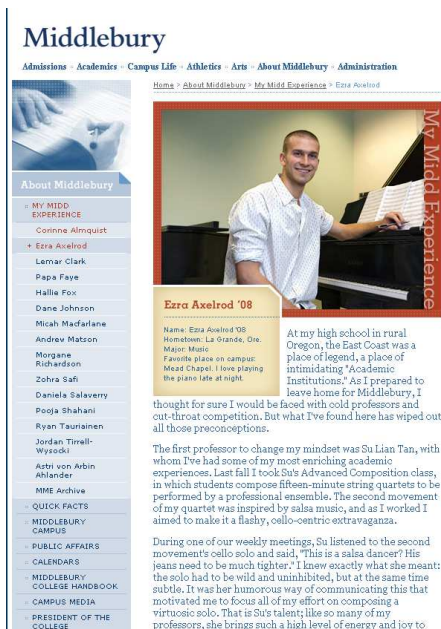
#### Example 1

Carnegie Mellon profiles five students through the journey of a day. The story begins with a headline naming the student and with a close-up image of the student, framing the upper portion of their bodies at mid-distance. Though the image



**Figure 4.1: Example from Carnegie Mellon University**

has a wide angle, the focus remains on the student as the remainder of the image frames a textbox to the left of the image. This box showcases the students' year, age, major, and hometown. In the main body of the text, the framing is reversed, as the text frames two to three supplementary images. These images show students at work or at play, some from further distances, and each has an overlaid timestamp to correspond with the written story. Timestamp headings demarcate breaks in the text as well, which averages 500 words and includes red links to other university web pages.



## Example 2

Middlebury College names their profiles, “My Midd Experience,” as seen in the side title in the orange frame surrounding each image. The student’s name also appears in orange text, followed by year, hometown, major, and favorite place. Distinguished from the main text by a manila box, the text color of blue matches the main typeface, which wraps around the box. The written profiles retain a first person point-of-view through three or four paragraphs totaling approximately 275 words.

**Figure 4.2: Example from Middlebury College**

### Example 3

The College for Creative Studies titles each profile by career track with a subtitle of the student's name. The image on the left is approximately the same size as the textbox on the right, which provides the graduation year, major, employer, and job title. The main text of 325 words wraps around both of the visual features and continues against a stark white background.

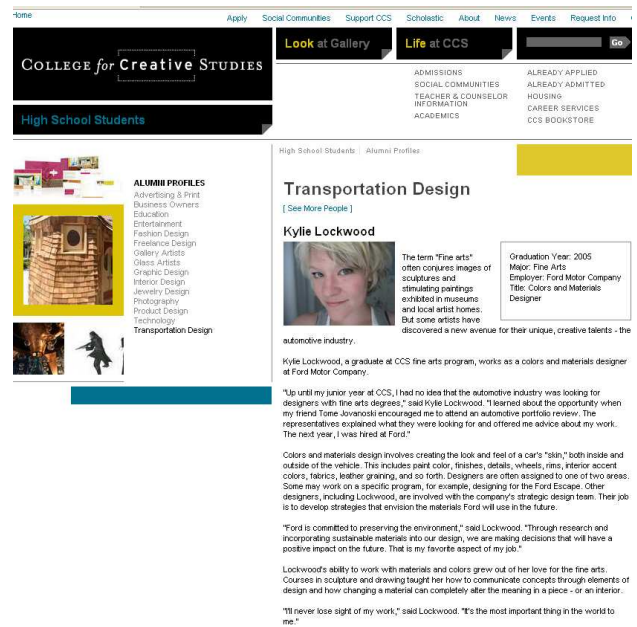


Figure 4.3: Example from College for Creative Studies

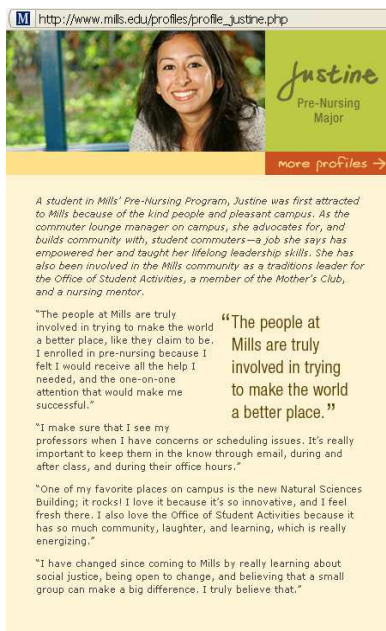
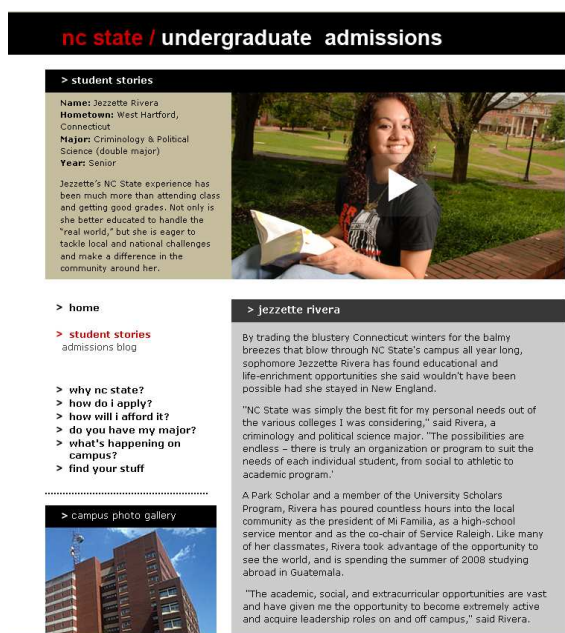


Figure 4.4: Example from Mills College

### Example 4

The profiles of Mills College open in a separate window, with a dark blue frame around the entire profile. Inside this border is a colorful combination of image, name and major textbox and main text. The textbox aligns with the image and both are separated from the main text by a thick line and link to more profiles. The handwritten or script typeface for the name contrasts with the more traditional typeface of the main text. The main text, averaging 200 words, offers color contrast from the beige background and wraps around a pull quote on the right side.

## Example 5



**Figure 4.5: Example from North Carolina State University**

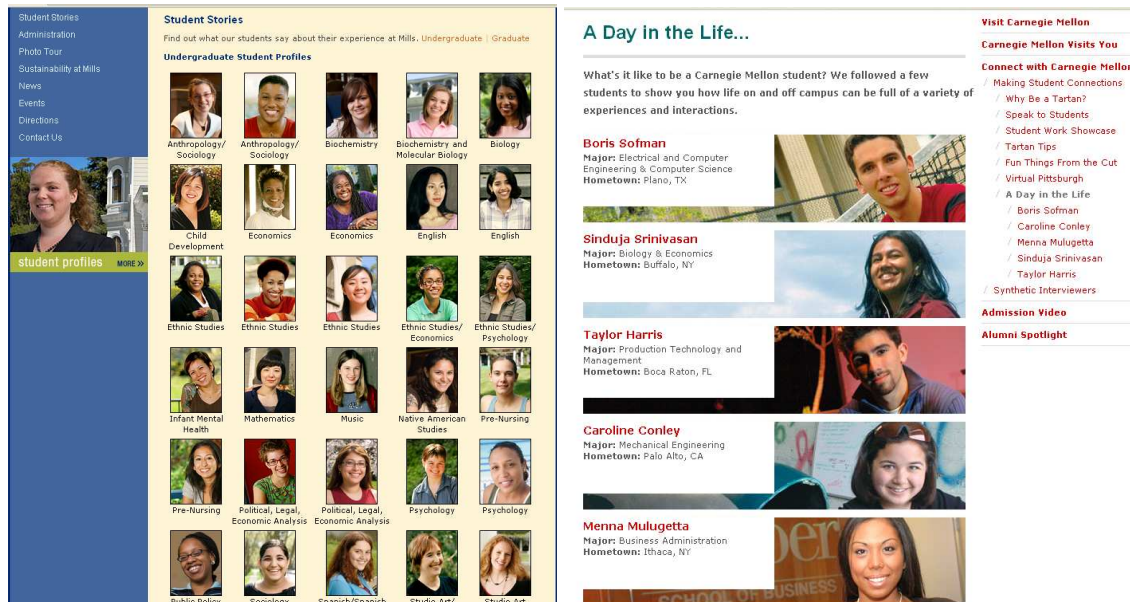
The student stories at North Carolina State University provide written profiles, video testimonials, and admissions blogs all on the same page. Each story begins with the student's name, hometown, major, year, and short introduction in a tan textbox, aligned with a still image from the video testimonial. The student's name titles the main text, averaging 300 words, which is in a gray.

Each profile ends with a list of links that encourage visitors to "explore NC State."

## *Visual Analysis*

An analysis of the visual elements in the profiles includes the two salient features of the image and smaller textbox. In addition to the individual profiles, the visual analysis encompasses the introductory page which lists all the profiles. In the initial layout of all profiles (see Figure 4.6), two schools organize the pages by disciplines rather than student name. Three of the five schools in the sample feature images of students along with their name, their major, or a headline that introduces their story. Of these more visual layouts, two resemble yearbook pages, consisting of smiling faces, aligned in columns and rows, a connotation that reframes the headlines as superlatives. A third

visual introduction features five profiles with larger, more scenic images connecting the students to campus locations and activities.



**Figure 4.6: Pictorial Profile Lists from Mills College and Carnegie Mellon**

At first glance, the visual profiles in this study match some features of more traditional forms. On the individual pages, they are relatively the same size overall – three inches or slightly smaller – and feature a close up view of a person’s facial features, with supplementary images at longer distances or of mentioned objects and events. Their individual features vary by institution, as noted in Table 4.1, where the gray rows depict the visual features of the profile lists, seen above. The characteristics examined in each profile include image gaze, distance, and framing.



**Table 4.1: Visual Analysis of Images**

<b>Profile Name</b>	<b>Image Gaze</b>	<b>Image Distance</b>	<b>Image Framing</b>
Carnegie Mellon	direct	close	angled
Boris	direct	long	angled
Sinduja	direct/indirect	mid-long(2)	straight/angled
Caroline	direct/indirect	mid (2)	straight
Middlebury	none	none	none
Pooja	direct	mid	angled
Ezra	direct	mid	angled
Andrew	indirect	mid	angled
Creative Studies	none	none	none
Kylie	direct	close	straight
Sean	direct	close	straight
Angie	direct	close	straight
Mills	direct	close	straight
Emilie	indirect	close	angle in image
Anna	direct	close	straight
Justine	direct	close	straight
NC State	direct	close	straight/angled
Jezzette	direct	mid	angle in image
Andrea	direct	mid	angle in image
Andrew	indirect	mid-long	angle in image

### Example 1

As seen in the first example, Carnegie Mellon features more than one image with each profile. The headline image shows the student's face and connects with viewers through a direct gaze. Supplementary images use an indirect gaze to move the viewers' focus to other elements, such as a project, a friend in conversation, or a tennis ball in action. The distance of the individual images reveals a pattern of mid to mid-long distances by showing the student from the waist up, leaving room for the background to show classroom walls, a campus building, and a tennis net. These lines help frame the



subject within the theme of the profile. Two of the three students also angle their body away from the viewer, while turning their face to address the camera directly.

#### Example 2

As seen in the second example, Middlebury College prefers a mid-distance in their profile images. Students are shown from the waist up, with room for a signature object – a piano, book, or football. Two students directly address the viewer by gazing at the camera, while the third student looks at the football he has just thrown in the air, thus creating vectors or action within the orange frame.

#### Example 3

The College for Creative Studies uses close or very close distances in their images to feature students' faces. All stare directly at the camera, with two seeming to hold the camera themselves. The background is abstract or out of focus, adding little to the overall meaning of the image.

#### Example 4

Mills College also favors the close image distance showing head and shoulders. Two students directly address viewers, turning their body and gaze straight to the camera. One student positions her body and turns her head to her left to form a vector that leads to her name and major in the adjoining next box, thus keeping viewers focused on the page.

#### Example 5

In the final example, North Carolina State University provides a still frame from a video of the student. These images capture the student at a mid to mid-long distance, and

all incorporate an oblique angle. As the students turn their bodies, more of the background appears in the frame, and viewers can see paths with greenery and campus buildings. Two of the three students turn their faces and gaze toward the camera.

### Patterns and Purposes

The preferred close cropping or framing of the visual profile lists and most of the individual profiles could be the effect of web space and file size, or a more intentional decision to depict a close relationship with viewers. This close distance, defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) to show the head and shoulders of a participant (p. 130), corresponds to the folk art silhouette, epitomized by the “the puffy-sleeved artist” who showed details of the face and shoulders (DiCicco, 2001, p. 42). In the past, artists captured a person’s profile as a way of sharing pictures with a friend or loved one; thus, they were an intimate expression. Of the three institutions that chose to include images with their lists of profiles, all framed the images at a close distance which suggests this same intimate relationship. The photographs in student profiles share the goal to establish a close relationship based on the close distance, indicative of face-to-face interaction. Within this imaginary relationship, students are portrayed as though they are friends.

The feature of gaze strengthens this relationship but also departs from the visual profile portrait, as it establishes a direct approach rather than a sideways glance. The gaze within images first characterizes the pictorial genre, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 126). In their dichotomy, a direct gaze constitutes a “demand” because it demands that the viewer entered into a relationship with the subject or with the text (p. 122). By contrast, when the gaze is indirect, the image inscribes an “offer,” allowing

viewers to gaze upon the text as information or to view the subjects, “as though they were specimens in a display case” (p. 124). Silhouette artists prefer the indirect gaze type, since visual profiles throughout their evolution have been put on display in homes or art galleries. However, the images in this corpus of written profiles rely extensively on the direct gaze, particularly when first displayed to viewers. The introductory lists of profiles extensively use images with a direct gaze, even if later images of the same student depict an offer rather than a demand. Of these individual images, three out of 15 texts employ an indirect gaze. The preferred direct gaze establishes a connection between the students in the profiles and the students viewing the profiles. In other words, the gaze initiates the viewers’ relationship with the students’ stories. As Kress and van Leeuwen explain,

There is, then, a fundamental difference between pictures from which represented participants look directly at the viewer’s eyes, and pictures in which this is not the case. When represented participants look at the viewer, vectors, formed by the participants’ eyelines, connect the participants to the viewer. Contact is established, even if it is only at an imaginary level. (p. 122)

The angle established through gaze can coincide or conflict with other angles or vectors in the image, often creating double messages between body and face angles. In several examples from the corpus, especially those from North Carolina State University, the body of a represented participant is angled away from the plane of the viewer, while the head and the gaze is turned towards it (Figure 4.7). As a result, the gaze is direct, while the overall angle in the image is oblique, a unique twist that impacts the overall message. As Kress and van Leeuwen posit, “The difference between the oblique and the frontal

angle is the difference between detachment and involvement” (p. 143). Images can have a frontal or oblique point of view, or some degree in between; however the frontal angle allows the viewer to identify with the representation rather than be excluded by an oblique angle.



**Figure 4.7: Image with direct gaze and oblique body angle**

Together, the direct gaze and oblique angle form vectors, directing the attention into the image rather than pushing viewers back from the text. Consistent with analyses of gaze and distance, the strategy appears to be involvement or closeness. The angles within the images then work to lead viewers into the individual student stories. Several institutions also favored this pattern of angled body, direct gaze, with some exceptions, particularly the close cropped images where body angle was not a factor. The College for Creative Studies deviated from this overall pattern, insisting instead of very close images cropped to show only faces, with frontal angles. In addition, Carnegie Mellon supplemented an opening close-distance image with mid- or long-distance images, showing students at work or at play, and Middlebury used an indirect gaze, oblique angle in an image that depicted athletic action. Though less inviting toward viewers, these depictions relate to the overall theme or story of the profiles, by allowing room for action

and associated objects. Moreover, these mid to long distance shots feature additional elements that allow viewers to identify with the university or college, as well as the individual student. Figure 4.7 exemplifies two common features: the college t-shirt and the building in the background. In the sample of profiles, six texts include images that background recognizable features of the campuses, and all of the NC State students wear collegiate apparel. Since nondescript backdrops and clothing could easily replace these characteristic features, they constitute promotional elements in the visual form.

Though varied in size and placement, these images contain several similarities or visual patterns that establish the genre of the profile at the lowest level of form, particularly through the framing or distance, the gaze, and the angles within the images. Their visual rhetoric adheres to the angle of the silhouette but takes a turn toward the viewer that is uncharacteristic of the art form and more depictive of the written form. This interactivity between the images and the written profile, and more importantly between the representative participants and the viewers, establishes the general purpose of the visual part of the profiles. They allow a close-up view of students that establishes connections with viewers and connections to important aspects of the campus setting and campus life.

### *Narrative Analysis*

An analysis of the 15 profiles from five colleges and universities shows how the producers of the texts follow a similar move structure, while individualizing the stories through the extensiveness of quotes, emphasis on supplementary moves, and

development of themes. The individual narratives vary by institution, as each develops a template, observed in the general description and deconstructed into themes and moves in this part of the analysis. The visual layout offers the first indication of the move structure. For these profiles, the analysis of the narrative or written portion of the profile includes both the visual distinct “quick facts” and the longer narrative. Paragraphs offer the next visual distinction, though the move indicators narrow to the sentence level, specifically through choice of subjects and verbs. Table 4.2 below shows the order of the information designated by a numbered sequence in the rows for each of the texts. For example, in the Middlebury College profile for Ezra, his name (1), class year (2), and hometown (3) are mentioned before his major (4) and his favorite place on campus (5). The profile does not list his age, though the age of students appears in profiles from other universities, so it is a category for the analysis of the quick facts section. Additional categories in the main narrative or the body text include courses/majors, experiences, opportunities, goals, careers, relationships, community, activities, places, impacts/achievements, and skills. For this condensed analysis, the table shows the most common themes observed in more than half of the texts. Each example pulls out features unique to the institution and compares the similar moves, leading to an obligatory move structure or a set of conventions found in all of the texts in this sample. In addition, the structure reveals a pattern of promotional moves that sketch an outline of the university’s persona, as a second character in the profile.

**Table 4.2: Analysis of Themes and Preliminary Order of Moves**

	Name	Age	Major	Year	Hometown	Majors	Journey	Opportunities	Goals	Career	Community	Friends	Advisors
<b>Profile Name</b>													
<b>Carnegie Mellon</b>													
Boris	1	2	3		4	7	10		5	6		8	9
Sinduja	1	2	3		4	5		7				6	
Caroline	1	2	3		4	5						6	
<b>Middlebury</b>													
Pooja	1		4	2	3	7	9	11	10		8	5	6
Ezra	1		4	2	3	7	5	7					6
Andrew	1		4	2	3	5		6		9		7	8
<b>Creative Studies</b>													
Kylie	1		3	2		6		5	7	4			
Sean	1		3	2		5		9	7	4	8		6
Angie	1		3	2		10		9	5	4	6	8	7
<b>Mills</b>													
Emilie	1		2			5	3	4					6
Anna	1		2			4	3	8	7		5		6
Justine	1		2			3				5	4	6	7
<b>NC State</b>													
Jezzette	1		3	4	2	7	5	6	9		10	13	8
Andrea	1		3	4	2	7	5		9		6	8	
Andrew	1		3	4	2	6			5	8	7		9

### Example 1

Although Carnegie Mellon had the fewest student profiles to choose from, with a complete list of only five profiles, the length of each story is longer than others selected for this study. These “Day in the Life” pieces, coincidentally labeled profiles by the university, adhere to the traditional advice about chronology in profile writing. The main organizational structure is the unit of time, as they separate each event into a part of the day. The result is a profile that mimics the all-encompassing descriptive profile by following the student through everything, but still strategically focuses on key aspects of a student’s day – groundbreaking projects, graduate school decisions, running next to the Dean – which pushes it toward the categories of classification or public relations profiles. Though depicted as an average day for these students, the focus in the narratives is anything but average. Instead, the details focus on accomplishments and multitasking, thus incorporating as many examples and promotional elements as possible to appeal to a larger audience.

Unique features of the three profiles from this institution include their emphasis on time management, a feature relating to the overall chronological structure, and their details about places on campus, particularly buildings and student spots as well as dining options. Food and friendship frequently go together, and as students describe the availability of vegetarian meals, the half-price student special, and the favorite dish in the dining hall, they appeal to readers’ stomachs and wallets. In addition, the introductory “quick facts” include both the students’ ages and years of expected graduation. The first image of the student frames the textbox of quick facts, while subsequent images, labeled



by time of day to correspond to the narrative, show the students in action playing sports, talking with friends, or working on a class project. These activities provide the theme for each profile, as each shows the many options on campus from dining, to academics, to activities. In addition, the extensive narrative and subsequent images show how students fit everything into their schedules, thus expressing the kinds of practicality and ambition valued at the university.

### Example 2

Through a collection of “compelling stories,” Middlebury College allows students to tell others about “My Midd Experience.” They also contain the most extensive “quick facts” section of any of the profiles in the corpus. The introductory section is visually separated from the main text by a thick manila-colored tab, establishing the feeling of opening a folder of student information. This information includes the name and major, along with hometown and favorite place on campus. Like the visual inclusion of campus buildings in images, this information provides a larger view of the college beyond the individual story.

Example of Quick Facts:

*Name: Ezra Axelrod '08*

*Hometown: La Grande, Ore.*

*Major: Music*

*Favorite place on campus: Mead Chapel. I love playing the piano late at night*

All three profiles selected in the sample begin with a memory of looking at colleges or beginning college at Middlebury, followed by a turning point that made their decision of

choosing a school, choosing a major, or changing their perceptions, a point that is part of the larger journey. The students attribute this turning point to advisors or mentors, implying and relying on myths about the transition to college, the shared values of trust and diligence, and the life changes experiences students could take if they attend Middlebury. The students share a particularly telling memory or illuminating incident, exemplifying the support they received; then they reflect on what they learned; and finally, they summarize where they hope to go in the future. Thus, even though the stories are all in the students' voices, they reveal a very similar narrative pattern. Each student chose a starting point, provided a memory or example that changed their path, and concluded by listing their successes or future impacts. They attribute these achievements to the opportunities at the college, and more specifically to the relationships they build there.

### Example 3

The profile examples from the College for Creative Studies differ from others in the sample because they are the only texts identified as profiles in the headline and they chronicle the lives of alumni, rather than current students. However, because they focus on aspects of the participants when they were students, and they target high school students based on their being published on the high school section of the recruitment site, they still fit the rhetorical situation of this study. Appropriately, these stories focus on careers listed along with graduation year and major, while details about campus and residence life are notably absent from the texts. They recount how the students turned

opportunities at the college into fulfilling experiences that led to their current success, as seen in the following example:

*Lockwood's ability to work with materials and colors grew out of her love for the fine arts. Courses in sculpture and drawing taught her how to communicate concepts through elements of design and how changing a material can completely alter the meaning in a piece - or an interior.*

The overall move structure of these examples reverses the typical order by inserting details about a person's job before detailing their coursework and experiences at the college. This order leaves room for connections, particularly how various majors and programs prepared students for the positions after graduation. More telling, this structure allows the university to promote itself through subtle sentence arrangement. For example, the coursework contributed to her Lockwood's professional success. The academic merit of the university shines through the narrative. Within this narrative, a similar move structure still emerges from the texts, but they complicate the form by focusing first on careers. Again, students attribute their success to relationships with friends, alumni, and faculty members through direct quotes, but rather than stand alone, surrounding summaries qualify their experiences in relation to the overall story the college wants to tell. The resulting theme is how opportunities and experiences at the college led students down alternative and unexpected career paths.

#### Example 4

The student stories at Mills College also combine extensive quotes with a summary that introduces the student. They share several features with the profiles at the

College of Creative Studies, from an overall organization by majors to explicit identification as profiles. This explicit classification system also highlights an attempt at identification. Prospective students can choose a profile based on shared interests and shared subjects. The shortest of any texts in the sample, they begin with only two quick facts – name and major. The third-person introduction describes the students’ hometowns in relation to their journey to college and describes how the students’ interests brought them to campus, and more importantly how these interests have taken them abroad or led to impacts in the local community. In addition, the introduction includes several promotional elements, like the adjective “notable” in the first sentence in the following example of the introductory narrative:

*Anna arrived at Mills from Minnesota, attracted to the College’s notable anthropology program. Her interest in people and cultures took her to Hungary in 2005, where she spent a summer pursuing independent study. Back on campus, Anna often takes advantage of the many cultural events and lectures at Mills, in addition to volunteering with AmeriCorps.*

The Mills examples reveal a very uniform structure and theme. They reiterate a major or program of the student; in one example the student is undecided. Then, they list activities, ask students to state important relationships, and conclude with a statement about experiences, opportunities, or impacts. Additionally, two of the three profiles include quotations about favorite places on campus, which do not tie to the overall narrative but instead offer another connection to viewers wanting to learn more about campus. Overall, however, the theme of these texts revolves around opportunities outside of the classroom.

### Example 5

North Carolina State University tells student stories through a written account, still image, and video testimonial. Even with these diverse means of telling the story, the profile portion of the page follows the same layout and move structure of other examples. It opens with a catchy headline, such as “Learning Skills” or “Branching Out” indicative of advertising or public relations. The quick facts include name, major, hometown, and year, plus a one sentence introduction to the main text. This text combines a third-person narrative, beginning with the students’ locations or outlooks before college, with first-person quotes explaining their feelings and decisions.

These examples also have a very clear narrative structure, starting with a summary of the journey and a statement about dreams, goals, or reasons for making the move; a quote from the student; summary of coursework and activities, particularly how the first impacts the second; details about important relationships in the words of the students; a qualifying statement that moves the story forward; and a concluding quote from the student reiterating or promoting the opportunities at the university. The students share their reasons for choosing NC State over other schools and mention the ways they found fellow students who share the same passions and goals. Through direct quotes, the profiles also turn these shared goals toward the reader. Notably, the three examples ended in the students’ voices, though the words were similar. They all credited their success to relationships and the university as a whole, as in Jezzette’s profile:

*"Before arriving at NC State, I never considered pursuing a degree beyond the undergraduate level, but with the support of the NC State community, my new*

*goal is to pursue a J.D. at Yale Law School," Rivera said. "Without the constant motivation of friends and faculty, I would not have achieved the same level of success."*

### Patterns and Purposes

The shared moves among the profiles, named obligatory moves below, suggest evidence of a common genre, while the supplementary moves, observed in at least half of the samples, complicate the generic form. For example, the profiles from the College for Creative Studies supplement the conventional structure with a description of creative talents and career paths. Since their subject is alumni rather than current students, they also highlight or chronicle future goals. Other examples supplement the generic form by adding more headlines, as seen in the timestamps of Carnegie Mellon's profiles, or by the reliance on quotes, as Mills College's profiles. Even with this differentiation through the presentation of information visually and verbally, the student profiles share characteristics of form. An analysis of this intertextuality, or of the features at work across the texts, reveals the narrative structure of the student profile.

**Table 4.3: Summary of Obligatory Move Structure for Five Institutions**

<b>Carnegie Mellon</b>	<b>Middlebury</b>	<b>College for Creative Studies</b>	<b>Mills</b>	<b>NC State</b>
introduce by name, age, major, hometown	introduce by name, year, hometown, major, and favorite place	introduce by name, year, major, employer and title	introduce by name and major	introduce by name, hometown, major, and year
describe work and major	describe major and major decision	describe creative talents	chronicle journey to college	chronicle journey to college
emphasize time management	depict relationships with friends, teammates, advisor	describe career or job duties	describe major	list opportunities or achievements
depict relationships with friends	chronicle journey to or through college	depict impact	list activities	describe major
highlight dining options	list impacts or achievements	describe coursework	describe relationship with advisor	describe relationships with community, advisors, friends
list activities		chronicle future goals	list favorite places	chronicle plan of action and goals

This grouping shows that all of the institutions in the corpus draw on a highly conventionalized move repertoire when producing personal profiles. The obligatory structure includes:

- An introduction by name and major
- A second mention of the major or details about coursework
- A description of the journey to college, through college, or from college
- Attribution of experiences or opportunities to community, advisors, friends, teammates and, by extension, to the university as a whole

Additionally, some profiles include lists of activities, accompanied by memories or future plans, a list of impacts or individual achievements, details about a job or career, and

descriptions of a favorite place on campus, particularly iconic buildings or dining options. Though all organizations introduced their students by name and major, several added information about their graduation year and hometown, particularly those universities that chronicled the students' journey to school. This pattern matches the requirements of narrative theory, where the ordered plot moves from one location, opportunity, or experience to the next, and the introductory text or textbox, as several examples frame this essential information in a separate visual unit, concisely establishing a consistency of characters and character descriptions.

Viewers learn about each student from their photographs and what might be called "quick facts" – a list of vital information. This information provides the first identification of the student and also allows viewers to find connections or initially to identify with the stories. For instance, viewers might choose to click on and read about someone with similar academic interests or someone from the same area of the country. As a result, the quick facts become a starting point or anchor for student stories or experiences, as they are titled by the institutions. They acknowledge that the stories present a variety of experiences, but this analysis shows how the presentation or narrative structure of these experiences is very similar, particularly within the examples from each institution. Each story emphasizes the academic side of the institution by listing the major or details about coursework, describes the students' journeys to, through, or from college, and most importantly attributes experiences to the community. This information again attempts to connect with viewers, while pulling them into the campus scene.



### *Repurposing the Profile Genre*

To this point, the analyses focused salient features in the textual form of profiles, answering the first research question about patterns in the texts. The initial visual impact of the profiles establishes a friendly connection with viewers through the overall layout of close or mid-distance images. All of the individual profiles selected for analysis provided images of the student, framed in a way to show connection to the audience or connection to activities mentioned in the text. The narrative structure provides additional attempts at connection or identification through features in the texts that depict the institution and moves that promote the institution. These characteristics essentially repurpose the profile as a genre suited for the marketization of university discourse. For example, the quick facts section of the profile always includes the student's name and major. On one hand, this move introduces the student; on the other hand, it introduces the university through its traditional business of academics. In its basic form, these quick facts provide credentials for the student, similar to the first two moves of the press release genre as described by Tench (2003): introduce the subject and establish credentials. The additional information enhances the character, distinguishing the stories from each other and beginning to sketch an outline of the university as well. This supplemental information in the quick facts can include the individual characteristics of student age, graduation year, hometown, or job title, and an institutional characteristic through favorite place on campus. Consequently, these simple lists offer an innocuous promotion of the essential university services, such as a wide selection of classes and accessible

campus facilities. As a result, the profile introduces both a subject – the student – and a product – the course offerings.

Other variations from the descriptive and self-profile types further distinguish these student profiles, while institutional variations reveal the promotional moves and differentiate the institutions from one another. Only Carnegie Mellon adhered to the standard profile writing advice about following a subject through an average day, yet their texts lacked any evidence of quotes or perspectives from outside sources. In contrast, Middlebury College relied exclusively on first-person narrative, and Mills College relied heavily on quotes, best fitting the category of the self-profile. However, rather than read like a cover letter of self promotion, they focus on achievements in relation to the institution's support. Given this editorial mission, they best fit the category of classification profiles written around a theme. As a result, the student profiles collectively reveal a promotional slant, interpreted through the lens of the marketization of university discourse and summarized in the promotional move structure below:

- Introduce major or academic merit
- Showcase places on campus (visual or verbal)
- Describe student's decision to attend
- Depict options in courses, activities, dining, etc.
- Highlight support system and value system

The presence of these promotional moves depends on the sponsoring organization. Accordingly, the substance or themes of the profile varied by institutions, though all presented a consistent character and a coherent plot – two requirements of narrative

theory. The narrative, in turn, reinforced or constructed the identities, roles, and relationships of the students and the institutions.

### *A Sketch of Characters*

Similar to the structural moves that create the narrative of a profile, the promotional moves help tell the story of the university. The themes and structure of the profiles reveal key aspects of the institution's character in addition to telling the student story. The aggregate identities summarize the key features of the characters.

- Carnegie Mellon profiles focus on engineering and science majors. The students manage multiple activities, including courses and research, and epitomize the leadership and teamwork skills valued by the university. They tackle challenges on and off the tennis court, show problem solving skills in course projects, and detail the rigorous schedule of Carnegie Mellon students.
- The profiles of Middlebury feature the traditional liberal arts majors of music and creative writing, as well as biochemistry, an inclusion that shows how the institution adapts to the needs of students. The students share their experience in their own words, displaying the values of learning, reflection, and awareness valued by the college. As the students describe their journey to and through college, they emphasize the effects of their environment, citing a turning point that led to their current or future success.
- The College for Creative Studies also narrates its students' success through unexpected or alternate career paths in an effort to show how a fine arts degree

can lead many different directions. Their programs of study that construct the profile list take prominence over individual stories and student names. The college fosters the student's pursuit of excellence through coursework and mentorships.

- Mills College also centered each story on the major or program of study, then quickly moved outside of the classroom by asking students to speak about their experiences in the local community and abroad. The college encourages intellectual exploration through study abroad or through the process of choosing a major. The students highlight other features of the campus and the community, as they speak about the people and favorite places, they depict the overall learning environment.
- North Carolina State University highlighted diverse stories and majors by chronicling students' decision to attend the university, their experiences so far, and their decisions to branch out with the help of the campus community. The headlines emphasize the key characteristics of the student stories and the values of the institution, including learning skills, branching out to other activities beyond the classroom, and relying on advisors' experience to help students continue their journey successfully.

While understanding the moves or conventions of the profile helps establish its status as a genre, it sketches another incomplete picture. The similarities across the texts were only one similarity of concern in this study. The other important similarity exists within the texts, namely the shared values, experiences, interests that attract the audience. On one

hand, the similarities inscribe the genre within the competitive framework of the market. Each text must adhere to a common move structure to be recognizable as a profile. On the other hand, the institutions must find unique ways to stand out from the crowd, to create a competitive advantage subtly within the stories. A discussion of the collective figure of the student profiles provides an answer to the second part of the second research question, namely how the profiles reveal and extend the marketization of university discourse. The characterizations of the students and the institutions continue to merge and overlap in a dialogic relationship.

### *A Selection of Strategic Stories*

Similar to the cutting of profiles, the photographers and writers must capture the essential characteristics – hair, forehead, eyes, nose, mouth – but their attention to detail – an long forehead or a prominent nose – makes each profile unique. The same strategy applies in the student profiles for universities. All of the schools visually highlight the quick facts about their students. At a minimum, these facts include name and major. Other schools use the textbox to list graduation year, hometown, career, or even favorite place on campus. Details about the university or college fill the body text of the profiles. All of the texts reference majors or programs of study a second time, always in relation to how they prepare the student for the future, whether that future in near-term course projects or long-term career goals and graduate school prospects. The student is never working alone. Rather, they gain the support friends, colleagues, advisors, and faculty. In other words, the profiles detail and promote the various means of support within the

institution. By extension, the institution is friendly and supportive, able to provide an opportunities and help students reach their goals. This strategy of friendship, which appears in both the visual framing of the images and the text of the profiles, reveals the promotional purpose of the profiles. Though each profile is an individual character sketch, collectively, they sketch the character or persona of the institution. They seek identification with individual students and with the university or college as a whole. As prospective students identify with the people and the institutions and ultimately make a crucial financial and educational decision to attend an institution, they reinforce the institution's identity.

Like Courtright and Smuddle's (2009) analysis of recall communication, this study aims to move beyond the tactical considerations in message design to answer questions about the strategic role of the student stories. The themes highlighted above offer the first clue. Carnegie Mellon gives us a full plate, with the lavish options and portions we might find only at an award banquet. Middlebury College allows us to open a filing cabinet of student experiences. We see their vital information, visually distinguished in the manila tab, and we read their first-person account of the move to college, their challenges and success, the influence of their environment, and their future plans. The College for Creative Studies moves to create agency in their coursework. Classes and class projects create opportunities for students and connect to professions. Mills College focuses on programs of study, identifying their strong points and marking them with adjectives. Through the introductory, yearbook style page, they showcase the array of major options, while individual profiles promote the features of each option. NC

State lets its students guide us through the narrative journey, similar to one student who had her cousin show her around campus her junior year. As she concludes, “Coming to NC State has most definitely been the best decision I could have possible made. I can’t picture myself anywhere else.” Through the combination of images and stories, these institutions hope prospective students viewing the profiles will say the same thing.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSIONS

It suggests that what we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, the ends we may have: we learn that we may eulogize, apologize, recommend one person to another, instruct customers on behalf of a manufacturer, take on an official role, account for progress in achieving goals. (Miller, "Genre as Social Action," p.165)

The short form of the profile highlights prominent features of the student's experience, but given the setting of university discourse, the features construct more than individual identities. The profile, as it appears in university discourse, presents a form that is both visual and written, descriptive and promotional. Its meaning lies in the details, while its origins stem from a rich and varied history of silhouette artists and biographers. These new manifestations twist and turn the traditional advice to form new types of profiles that fit a different time and situation. They adapt to the rhetorical situation of the marketization of university discourse, where they work within publication constraints of the organization's identity, address an audience of prospective students, and respond to or create an exigence of promotion. Following the lineage of profile types, these texts perform different cultural work, specifically the promotion of people and places.



### *Promotion of People and Places*

Like their predecessors, these profiles of students tell the story of people. They also construct the institutional identity. In this strategic role, they help define what the organization is and what it wants to be through the telling of compelling stories about student success and dreams. Some of the examples depict a larger view of the university through image background or additional images of campus grounds and buildings. Others name favorite places in the quick facts section of the texts or asked students to state their favorite place. All of the profiles connect opportunities or experiences to the campus community or people within that community, such as friends, mentors, or instructors. The profile authors and designers extend this connection to the audience as well. The smiling faces and direct gaze of current students or alumni invite prospective students to learn more about the college or university, while the narrative structure introduces them to a new friend, provides a logical story, and promotes the organization.

In these ways, the student profiles share several features with prior studies of the form. Kaufer's (2006) study examined profiles that promoted people, an advancement shared by the organization. Askehave (2007) found that international university prospectuses promoted the university experience in an effort to sell aspects of place, rather than aspects of academics. In this case, even if the communicative purpose is promotional, these profiles anchor themselves in the traditional business of universities: academics. The schools in the sample always identify students by their name and major. Unlike Askehave's study, which determined international university prospectuses focus on non-academic attributes, specifically features of place, mimicking travel or tourist

guides, these profiles focus on personal journeys often beginning with an academic focus. She categorized the testimonial as a sub-genre of the prospectus, but these profiles stand alone on web pages, linked to more general admissions or recruitment information, but obviously individual texts worthy of analysis. The profiles in this study respond to a similar situation of prospectuses, as they also provide information about academics, activities, athletics, careers, and other experiences to an audience of prospective students, but they are also impacting the situation by integrating elements from other genres, such as the yearbook or the press release. Like yearbooks, the list of profiles presents a page of names, faces or programs of students, allowing prospective students to choose their path on the site. The individual profiles provide a narrative, but leave room for readers to evaluate the person and the place. Like press releases, they present a partial or unfinished story. As such, they, too, require critical readers who should be aware of their promotional function.

Each institution has particularized constraints based on their organizational identities, and as a result they adapt the form to fit their situation. For instance, one university mentioned dining options in each profile, thus highlighting an additional feature of place and appealing to their audiences' emotions. Another extended the narrative beyond graduation to establish the success their students, or consumers, have had. Each college or university pulled from various traditions within organizational communication genres to construct the texts. As a hybrid promotional genre, these profiles add another text for consideration in Fairclough's (1995) examination of the marketization of university discourse. Like the oft-studied prospectus, the profiles sell the

university experience, one story at a time, but they work through traditions of the profile form. As they add to the distortion of the profile, these examples have larger implications for university discourse. They contribute to the marketization of university discourse, shifting the roles of students as spokespersons, and changing the role of universities in attracting and retaining students as customers.

### ***Form and Function***

The genre perspective taken in this study accounts for distinctions in both the textual form of the profile and its cultural work or communicative purpose. Through this theoretical framework, we examined the recurrence of situation and form. The patterns of form evolved from the *New Yorker* standard described in Chapter 1. Kaufer (2006) generalizes and names this category the descriptive profile. He compares the descriptive profile to two other categories of profiles: the self-profile of cover letters and the classificatory profile with a common theme of people-on-the-move. The difference between people-on-the-move profiles and descriptive profiles is the focus on achievement or career advancement versus a more three-dimensional description including life outside of formal school or career. A one-dimensional approach to profiles matches their visual legacy of the silhouette, which literally depicts one side of a person. Some profile writers take a similar approach when they find an angle or a slant for their narrative, such as those who write for university publications. However, editors still debate the necessary detail and length needed for a character sketch to be called a profile.

Universities and colleges, on the other hand, clearly name their profiles or student stories, often displaying them on homepages or on recruitment and admission sites. As the sponsoring organization for the texts in this study, their naming practices provide the first clue to the genre status of the profile in this situation, while the placement of the profiles connects to the rhetorical situation, the foundation of genre theory. Chapter 2 discussed the importance of the recurrent situation in relation to the organization's identity, which drives and results from ongoing discourse. The situation and its response are reciprocal, thus the approach to texts and to genres developed by Fairclough (1995) and Askehave and Swales (2001) examines both aspects from multiple angles, similar to profile writers who examine their subjects from various angles.

Each analysis examined the structure of the profile, through elements in the images and moves in the narratives. The methods included a visual analysis based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) grammar of visual design. They connect elements in images to the social context, so image distance becomes indicative of social distance and overall framing establishes involvement or detachment. The framing between the image and the written text also was part of the analysis, specifically for the visual lists of profiles. Individual stories provided a narrative structure for analysis. Based on similar studies of promotional genres of the news release (Tench, 2003) and international prospectuses (Askehave, 2007), this study used a text-based method of move analysis to determine the narrative form and themes. When combined, the form and substance reveal the generic patterns in the profiles.

The analysis showed that the selected texts shared an obligatory move structure; however, their greatest differences are in the overall length of the profile ranging from 275 to 500 words. At this length, few go into the level of detail needed to classify them as descriptive profiles based on the *New Yorker* standard. Following Kaufer's (2006) initial distinction of the profile categories, these profiles make an effort to extend credit, successes, and impacts to the organization through the relationships that students establish from the moment their stories begin. In combination with the images, these narratives connect with viewers, offering them a glimpse of successful college life. The emphasis on the journey fits Kaufer's (2006) category of people-on-the-move profiles, "where individuals are portrayed as mobile within a larger context of showing off a company or a region as having the capitalist clout to support mobility" (p. 766).

Thus, these one-dimensional profiles of students fit the public relations category, as they share elements with promotional genres such as press releases and the prospectuses previously studied. The catchy headline, used extensively by one university, is one obvious example of an advertising genre, according to Fairclough (1995). Rather than introduce the profile by the student's name, they chose to focus on impacts or achievements. Two examples organize their profiles by major, and several rely on images and words to get their point and identity across to students. Each institution establishes a connection to the viewer visually through a direct image gaze or close-up shot and strengthens this connected by weaving together a personal story that ultimately centers on the opportunities, relationships, or connections that students found fulfilling and that future students might find appealing or attractive. This focus on making connections

within the stories and with the audience, even making new friends when pushed to the limits of interpretation, is the overall communicative strategy of the profiles.

The analysis answered the research questions by establishing a visual and narrative pattern for the profiles on university websites and by surmising the communicative purpose from the shared features, particularly those salient characteristics that catch viewers' attention. To fully understand the profile in the context of university discourse, though, this last chapter briefly reexamined the general communicative purpose in terms of the promotionalization or marketization of universities. Though limited to the sample, the conclusions provide a starting point for further research into the evolution of the profile, the production practices surrounding university discourse, the issue of organizational identity and voice versus individual identity and voice, and the nature of selective completeness inherent in all profile types.

### *Limitations of this Study*

For reasons of time and resources, this study examined a sample of 15 profiles selected from five universities or colleges recognized by the Council of Advancement and Support of Education for impressive individual student recruitment efforts in 2008. While this method of selection and sampling resulted in a variety of sponsoring organizations, ranging from large, state-supported universities, to liberal arts colleges, and an all-female school, the conclusions cannot be generalized beyond this sample. The study shows that five of the six colleges or universities on the 2008 list clearly display or identify their student profiles online. The visual and written texts share several common

features, including a shared image structure and obligatory move structure. Patterns revealed in this small sample may appear in other profiles from other institutions, but further research should examine these patterns quantitatively across a larger sample, which could include online and print versions of the profiles. In this case, the online sample provided greater accessibility to a variety of institutions.

Other limitations stem from the method of discourse analysis, which focused on finding similarities from one point view. This perspective overlooks distinctions of absence, in other words what is missing from the texts when compared to each other or to the evolution of the profile. Additional studies could explore missing features or add to this analysis by using the same criteria to classify the discourse again. A second or third pass through the texts by a different researcher would provide an interrater perspective needed to evaluate the reliability of the method. Other methods could help quantify the results.

Moreover, the approach to the texts relies on text-based methods that typically result in framing only the visible, salient characteristics. This approach to the texts mirrors the evolution of the profile as a visual and narrative form. However, like the art of cutting or writing profiles, it presents a one-dimensional view. Further analysis should strive for a more rhetorical understanding of the form. As Bazerman (2004b) explains in his overview of genre analysis, “This identification of genres through features is very useful knowledge for us to interpret and make sense of documents, but it gives us an incomplete and misleading view of genres. By seeing genres as only characterized by a

fixed set of features we come to view genres as timeless and the same for all viewers” (p. 317).

### ***Directions for Further Research***

In addition to applying and testing the narrative move structure in a larger sample of profiles and through different methods, this study suggests four main directions for further research. First, based on the review of the profile genre in Chapter 1, a separate study could examine the public relations profile diachronically, by examining texts from different time periods. In addition, a study could look at the production practices in connection with the final product, specifically through the framework of Fairclough introduced in Chapter 2. While these practices center on the publishing or sponsoring organization, additional studies should consider the viewers, readers, or consumers of the texts, since the analysis in Chapter 4 is from the perspective of a single consumer. Finally, a critical approach to the texts could more fully address what is left out of these abbreviated forms of the profile.

### **Profile Evolution**

For this study, the evolution of the profile as a visual and written form served as an introduction to the emergence or adaptation of the form in university discourse; however, the focus was the product not the process of evolution. As Yates and Orlikowski (1992) explain, a diachronic analysis observes the processes of genre emergence, maintenance, elaboration, modification, and decay. Part of this larger analysis would consider genre ecology (Spinuzzi & Zachry, 2000) and genre systems (Bawarshi,



2000; Yates & Orlikowski, 2002) to link the profile to related genres, including those exemplifying genre theory and promotional discourse. For example, Fairclough (1995) examines and compares prospectuses from different years of publication. Bazerman (2004b) suggests connecting related genres, such as the profiles in this study to the testimonials in Askehave's (2007) study to examine the genre system, though the samples would need to be from the same corpus to ensure similar rhetorical situations.

Additional studies of the evolution of the profile as university discourse should examine the connected forms of blogs and videos that appeared with one of the five examples. These increasingly multimodal forms extend the profile further beyond its journalism origins and further extend the voice of the subject beyond the voice of the organization. Yet, these additional texts contribute to and reveal the communications strategy. Several universities selected for the pilot test of the search term, "profile," also labeled videos with the moniker, and as such the profile video may be the next modification of the genre. As a result, a study of the evolution would add tree rings, according to Devitt (2004), helping us determine when and if cultural changes within the marketization of university discourse still occur. Tracing the student profile genre through its antecedent and descendant genres will add rings to our understanding of the corresponding social practice.

### Production Practices

The surrounding practice or production of the profile genre also warrants further research. Bazerman (2004b) suggests ethnographic research to see the full range of production surrounding a text, and several scholars advocate for an ethnomethodological

approach to genre studies (Devitt 2004; Miller, 1984; Tench, 2003). Though this kind of participant observation was beyond the scope of this study, the incorporation of user-defined profiles was one step in this direction. Moreover, I have some experience writing profiles for two universities that match some characteristics of the institutions selected for analysis. My knowledge of the production practices added to my interpretation of the text. Supplementing the endotextual approach with an exotextual methodology, as recommended by Gilpin (2008), could expand the explanatory power of my interpretation of the promotional elements in the texts. An ethnographic approach to profile production practices will also account for consumer response and provide additional explanations about the persuasive or promotional power of the profile.

### Multiple Perspectives and Voices

Factoring in reader response is one way to attend to the multiple perspectives that surround a profile, while several perspectives exist in the texts alone. As identified in the evolution of the profile, the journalistic standard requires that writers view their subject from multiple perspectives by interviewing family, friends, and enemies, and by including a description of the context. These short forms of student profiles leave little room for excessive details, but many provide at least two visible perspectives: the writer/designer and the subject. Several incorporate quotes from the student; some rely extensively on these quotes, though this analysis assumed that the editor artfully arranges the student responses.

The difference between first-person and third-person profiles poses a related problem for further investigation. This analysis included both perspectives, because each

fit the rhetorical situation of university discourse and the sponsoring organization identified the texts as profiles. However, based on the history of the profile, predominately first-person accounts could fit the self-profile rather than the public relations form of the profile. Analysis of the production practices or the connections to videos and blogs could offer further explanation. Though this study embraced the suggestion for copia or multiple perspectives, additional research should expand on several features that surfaced during the overview of profiles and the analysis of the small corpus.

### Selective Incompleteness

Additional studies should also examine what does not surface in these examples or examples of other profiles in university discourse. Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional approach to discourse acknowledges exclusions from the texts, and his extension and explanation of critical discourse analysis centers on ideologically significant choices. These choices and their ramifications provide evidence of larger strategies operating in the profiles. These strategic decisions might relate to organizational missions and identities in ways that could not be surmised from this small sample. As a result, we have more to see and to study in student profiles.

For universities, the profile represents a way for students to learn more about an organization and to identify with its mission and values, yet the written genre still retains some of the original connotations of the spatial profile, namely the angle at which we view the personal sketch, alternately stated as the power and ideology reflected and reproduced in the text. These issues relate to the theory of genre as social action.

Bawarshi (2000) explains the connection: “It is this notion of genre that I wish to explore in this study in order to investigate the roles that genre plays in the constitution not only of texts but of their contexts, including the identities of those who write them and those who are represented within them” (p. 335). However, an analysis of the individual and organizational identities represented in student profiles still leaves questions. Several of these questions address the sociorhetorical functions of genres, also identified by Bawarshi, as “the extent to which genres shape and help us recognize our communicative goals, including why these goals exist, what and whose purposes they serve, and how best to achieve them” (p. 339). This description of student profiles offers one structure of goal achievement, but is also selectively incomplete as it relies mainly on prominent features with some connection to production practices and organizational identities. We can achieve a more complete picture by continuing to reframe the profile through different theories, different lenses of analysis, different methodological approaches; however, in the end, the profile may retain some of the original connotation of the moniker. In all their manifestations, profiles remain a selective way of seeing the world, but their visual and narrative details reveal the larger story.

## APPENDIX

### SCREEN CAPTURES OF PROFILE LISTS AND STUDENT PROFILES


#### Example 1: Carnegie Mellon

#### Experience Carnegie Mellon


### A Day in the Life...

What's it like to be a Carnegie Mellon student? We followed a few students to show you how life on and off campus can be full of a variety of experiences and interactions.


**Boris Sofman**  
Major: Electrical and Computer Engineering & Computer Science  
Hometown: Plano, TX




**Sinduja Srinivasan**  
Major: Biology & Economics  
Hometown: Buffalo, NY




**Taylor Harris**  
Major: Production Technology and Management  
Hometown: Boca Raton, FL



**Caroline Conley**  
Major: Mechanical Engineering  
Hometown: Palo Alto, CA



**Menna Mulugetta**  
Major: Business Administration  
Hometown: Ithaca, NY



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- / Speak to Students
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- / Tartan Tips
- / Fun Things From the Cut
- / Virtual Pittsburgh
- / A Day in the Life
- / Boris Sofman
- / Caroline Conley
- / Menna Mulugetta
- / Sinduja Srinivasan
- / Taylor Harris
- / Synthetic Interviewers

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**Alumni Spotlight**

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- Campus Map

**QUICK LINKS**

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- Carnegie Mellon Visits You


**PERSPECTIVES**

- High School Juniors
- High School Seniors
- International Students

#### Experience Carnegie Mellon

### A Day in the Life of Boris Sofman

**Year:** Senior  
**Age:** 21  
**Major:** Electrical and Computer Engineering & Computer Science  
**Hometown:** Plano, TX



**9:30 PM**

Boris gets back from a weekend of tennis matches in Maryland against Goucher College and Washington College. After losing a close match that would have dined a spot in the NCAA national tournament, hopes are still high because there are two spots left and they can still make it if they step it up at the next few matches. After all, they did it last year! The long bus ride combined with much activity on the court all weekend has worked up quite an appetite for the team. They order pizza and Boris scarfs down a whole thin crust pepperoni—no problem.

**11:00 PM-2:00 AM**

Regardless of the late start, it's time to get some work done. However, not before he IMs his girlfriend with tomorrow's lunch plans and checks his email. Then it's preparation for tomorrow's recitation. This semester he's a teaching assistant (TA) for Introduction to Computer Systems, so in addition to grading and holding office hours, he teaches a 25-person recitation section every Monday. Boris enjoys the material of the class and likes the extra cash it brings in too! He hits the sheets around 2:00 AM.

**10:30-11:30 AM**

During Intro to Computer Systems, he leads a discussion on how memory allocation works and various implementation techniques -- his favorite part of the syllabus. He offers the class some tips on how to approach the new homework assignment, which is to write their own memory allocation driver, stays after class to answer a few questions and leaves feeling quite on top of things.

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**Admission Video**  
**Alumni Spotlight**

#### Experience Carnegie Mellon

### A Day in the Life of Sinduja Srinivasan

**Year:** Senior  
**Age:** 21  
**Major:** Biology & Economics  
**Hometown:** Buffalo, NY



**6:30 AM**

Sinduja is feeling good about getting up in time to do her early morning gym run. She gets to Skibo Gym and grabs her usual treadmill next to Dr. [Eric] Grotzinger from the Mellon College of Science. Even after three years, she is still a little weirded out to see her Associate Dean running along side her every morning! She showers quickly and jogs across campus.

**9:00 AM**

She's just in time for her Physical Chemistry (p-chem) quiz. It's nothing too difficult. She's been keeping up with the problem sets so it's business as usual.

**11:30 AM**

Starving! Sinduja had to skip breakfast this morning. Luckily, it's zucchini sandwich day at La Prima in Wean Hall, which sounds delectable to this vegetarian. They have the best sandwiches on campus. She grabs lunch to go and eats it on the green grass of the Cut, trying to soak up the beautiful weather. She does some reading for her Immunology class, but is so relaxed that she actually nods off for a couple of minutes...

**1:15 PM**

Luckily one of her friends and fellow Peer Health Advisor walks by and wakes her by imitating bagpipes. Not the most comfortable way to wake up, but effective nonetheless. She and her friend walk briskly toward the Mellon Institute for

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**Admission Video**  
**Alumni Spotlight**

#### Experience Carnegie Mellon

### A Day in the Life of Caroline Conley

**Year:** Sophomore  
**Age:** 20  
**Major:** Mechanical Engineering  
**Hometown:** Palo Alto, CA



**9:30 AM**

Caroline wakes up to the alarm. It's set on radio and she snoozes only once (her self-imposed limit) and forces herself out of bed after a late night of homework. She's ready in time to stop at the East Street Deli in the University Center (UC) for black coffee and a sesame bagel.

**10:45 AM**

Caroline arrives at the Mech E (Mechanical Engineering) cluster. She had intended to just print some documents for her stress analysis design project (for her mechanical engineering class aptly titled "Stress Analysis") but the Pioneers' Buggy Chair is there and Caroline ends up looking over some last-minute designs and material orders that they need to get their new buggy out and rolling this weekend. Spring Carnival is only a week away!

**11:15 PM**

At the undergraduate Mech E lab Caroline puts the finishing touches on her stress analysis design project, at least for now. It is a semester-long project and the second of three design reviews is tomorrow, where her group will present the headway that they've made so far on the crane-like structure they've designed. There are still a lot of changes to be made however...

**5:30 PM**

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- / Sinduja Srinivasan
- / Taylor Harris
- / Synthetic Interviewers

**Admission Video**  
**Alumni Spotlight**

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### Example 2: Middlebury College



# Middlebury

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## About Middlebury

[MY MIDD EXPERIENCE](#)

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## My Midd Experience

**A student from Nepal** who found the academic rigor he was looking for at Middlebury, and came to feel at home in the local community. A hockey star who studied the environment and earned a Watson Fellowship to travel the world. A fiddler and a chemistry student from the West Coast who has become a player in Middlebury musical circles, and picked up a prestigious academic fellowship. A young woman from Connecticut via New York City who helped found a student group dedicated to expanding the horizons of local school children in Vermont, and later won a scholarship for undergraduate and graduate study.

**Many of Middlebury's students** and recent alumni have compelling stories to tell. We've started a collection, and we'll be sharing them here, where we give these students and alumni a chance to tell you about "My Midd Experience."

We've also created an [archive](#) of previous "My Midd Experience" stories.

### CURRENT MY MIDD EXPERIENCE STORIES:

[CORINNE ALMSTED](#)  
[EZRA AXELROD](#)  
[LEHAR CLARK](#)  
[PAPA FAYE](#)  
[HALLIE FOX](#)  
[DANE JOHNSON](#)  
[NICAH MACFARLANE](#)  
[ANDREW NATSON](#)  
[MORGANE RICHARDSON](#)  
[ZOHIRA SAFI](#)  
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# Middlebury

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## About Middlebury

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### Ezra Axelrod '08

Name: Ezra Axelrod '08  
 Hometown: La Grande, Ore.  
 Major: Music  
 Favorite place on campus: Mesa Clark. I love playing the piano late at night.


At my high school in rural Oregon, the East Coast was a place of legend, a place of intimidating "Academic Institutions." As I prepared to leave home for Middlebury, I thought for sure I would be faced with cold professors and cut-throat competition. But what I've found here has wiped out all those preconceptions.

The first professor to change my mindset was Su Lian Tan, with whom I've had some of my most enriching academic experiences. Last fall I took Su's advanced Composition class, in which students compose fifteen-minute short quartets to be performed by a professional ensemble. The second movement of my quartet was inspired by salsa music, and as I worked I aimed to make it a flashy, celli-centric extravaganza.

During one of our weekly meetings, Su listened to the second movement's cello solo and said, "This is a salsa dancer? His jeans need to be much tighter." I knew exactly what she meant: the solo had to be wild and uninhibited, but at the same time subtle. It was her humorous way of communicating this that motivated me to focus all of my effort on composing a virtuosic solo. That is Su's talent; like so

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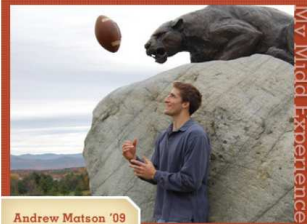
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**Andrew Matson '09**

Helen, Andrew Matson '09  
Horseshow, Coventry, Rhode Island  
Major: Biochemistry  
Favorite place on campus: Youngman Field

When I began looking at colleges, I knew I wanted to get a great pre-medical education and play football at a competitive level. At Middlebury, I found it was not only possible but enjoyable to do both. My athletic and academic experiences have complemented each other, and both have instilled in me a sense of diligence and confidence. Whether I am hurrying down to the football field from an afternoon lab or bearing down to write a paper after a late practice, I value the balance and focus that I get from being a student-athlete at Middlebury.

One of my favorite athletic experiences is a football game we played during our 2007 season, in the middle of an enormous storm. The game was a trial of will and character for our team. Due to weather delays, the game lasted more than four hours. Afterwards, we stood on the field exhausted, muddy, cold, and victorious. That moment reinforced my appreciation for the value of sports. It was incredible to look around at my teammates and realize the challenge that we had just faced together. The resilience that we exhibited on that day made each of us stronger.

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**Poja Shahani '09**

Name: Poja Shahani '09  
 Hometown: Hong Kong  
 Major: English (creative writing), minor in Economics  
 Favorite place in campus: Walking through the woods to the amphitheatre by the cemetery

## My Midd Experience

During my first year at Middlebury, a friend I'd met only a few months before encouraged me to speak to my advisor. I entered my advisor's office with the intention of deciding what my major would be. Instead, I sat in his office and cried for 15 minutes. He didn't say anything. He let me cry. After I was done pouring out my emotions, we talked. I didn't come out of his office with a clear plan for my academic life, but I came out understanding that it was all right to be vulnerable. I began to turn Middlebury as a community and as my home for four years.

When I applied to Middlebury, I had absolutely no idea what a liberal arts college was, where Vermont was—or what 30 degrees Fahrenheit felt like! For a 19-year-old Indian girl from Hong Kong, coming to America for an education had always been a distant dream. I was anxious when I embarked on the 18-hour journey, mostly because I had minimal knowledge about where I was going. But today, four years later, I can say that I have acquired a taste for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, learned new phrases such as “see you in a few”, tried to ski, and attempted adopted a southern accent. Now, the only



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Transportation Design

Hermidas Atabeyki

Hermidas Atabeyki is working on the design of the world's largest privately owned mega-yacht.

Kylie Lockwood

With a degree in the fine arts, Kylie Lockwood is making choices that will affect the future of automotive design.

Tyler Blake

Tyler Blake proves to the world that a car can be safer for the environment and still look good.

Robert Boniface

Leading his company's advanced design team, Robert Boniface draws inspiration from the past while looking forward into the future.

Terence Duncan

Experience and expertise launch innovative designer Terence Duncan above competition.

Ralph Gilles

Ralph Gilles attracted a new generation of Chrysler consumers with the design of the 300C.

Jeff Horitz

Senior industrial designer, Jeff Horitz is improving the design of "mile high" interiors.

Susan Lampinen

Susan Lampinen makes design decisions that impact the future of the entire automotive industry.

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College for Creative Studies - Advancing the Creative Spirit since 1906

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Kylie Lockwood

The term "fine arts" often conveys images of sculptures and stimulating paintings exhibited in museums and local artist homes. But some artists have discovered a new avenue for their unique, creative talents - the automotive industry.

Kylie Lockwood, a graduate at CCS fine arts program, works as a colors and materials designer at Ford Motor Company.

"Up until my junior year at CCS, I had no idea that the automotive industry was looking for designers with fine arts degrees," said Kylie Lockwood. "I learned about the opportunity when my friend Tonia Jovanovic encouraged me to attend an automotive portfolio review. The representatives explained what they were looking for and offered me advice about my work. The next year, I was hired at Ford."

Colors and materials design involves creating the look and feel of a car's "skin," both inside and outside of the vehicle. This includes paint color, finishes, details, wheels, vinyl, interior accent colors, fabrics, leather graining, and so forth. Designers are often assigned to one of two areas. Some may work on a specific program, for example, designing for the Ford Escape. Other designers, including Lockwood, are involved with the company's strategic design team. Their job is to develop strategies that envision the materials Ford will use in the future.

"Ford is committed to preserving the environment," said Lockwood. "Through research and incorporating sustainable materials into our design, we are making decisions that will have a positive impact on the future. That is my favorite aspect of my job."

Lockwood's ability to work with materials and colors grew out of her love for the fine arts. Courses in sculpture and drawing taught her how to communicate concepts through elements of design and how changing a material can completely alter the meaning in a piece - or an interior.

"It never loses sight of my work," said Lockwood. "It's the most important thing in the world to me."

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Angie Lai

As a student, Angie Lai knew she would have to do more than get good grades if she wanted to turn her dreams of creating games into a reality. Fortunately, she found her self surrounded by a community of mentors who could guide her in the right direction.

"Two of my instructors, Lora Parlave and Dave Chow, spent much of their own time after class and outside of class providing me with real world knowledge," said Lai. "As an informal student group, friends and classmates Jason (Hazelroth), Imran (Sheikh) and I often got together with Lora outside of school to talk about jobs, portfolios and be each other's support system. I also helped tremendously that we were quite diversified."

"As a student, I learned much of what the concept art field entailed by seeking out and speaking with accomplished alumni Marc Calabrese and Jay Shuster. Taking their advice to heart and witnessing their work ethic and drive helped me gain an insight into the professional world. They helped lay down a very different foundation for me that would have been very hard to learn within the walls of any classroom."

Lai noticed that the Illustration program focused on editorial and advertising projects. But she had a different goal - to break into the gaming/entertainment industry. By forming connections within the CCS community, utilizing the technology available at the College, and committing herself to researching the discipline, she succeeded.

"On my own time as a student, I studied a ton of the Art of... books, examined concept artist's online work and worked through Gronom DVD tutorials as a hobby and used them as a tool for learning," said Lai. "It was also critical to spend countless hours working in Photoshop and developing my own language."

As a concept artist for High Moon Studios, Lai collaborates with the art directors and level designers in the visual development of style, location, characters and other aspects of the game development process. She works on projects that range from real world to fantasy.

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Sean Evans

As a student, Sean Evans majored in crafts with a concentration in ceramics. Fine arts, especially clay sculpture and the production, were his primary focus. But through exploration in other departments, Evans discovered a new outlet for his creativity—computers. Today he enjoys a successful career as a freelance Web designer and a digital applications manager at Ford Motor Company.

His aims meter:

"My instructors knew my focus was not only in clay but also in the art and digital media," said Evans. "They encouraged me to experience these different mediums and expressed great interest in what I could bring to them."

"It was when I first started at CCS that the digital movement was really starting to roll. As a student, I frequently combined digital imagery with traditional craft mediums. My interest in web design grew from this and I found that I wanted to create more interactive works, something people could explore and learn from."

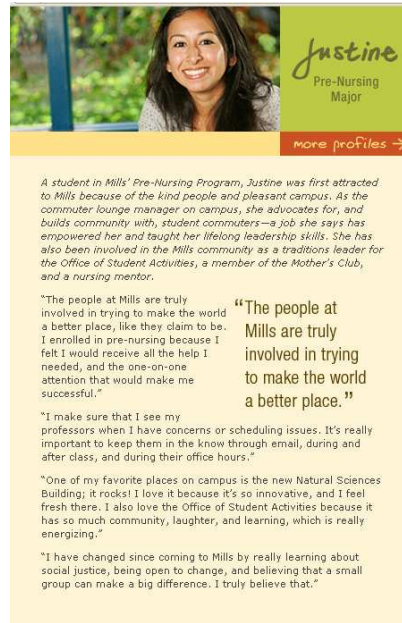
As a digital applications manager, Evans works with departments to upload content to the site. He ensures the pages are up-to-date and that the site serves as a virtual representation of the school's artistic vision. Working at CCS has also allowed Evans the opportunity to stay on the cutting edge of technology and Web design software.

"The Internet is constantly evolving and, with it, the interfaces and language people use to access it," Evans said. "I find this to be the biggest challenge of the field. Once I get my footing, there is something new and everything has changed. This happens more frequently each year."

"Fortunately, CCS has played a big part in allowing me to continue my education and stay current. I've been able to return, take classes and share what I have learned with others, possibly helping them achieve their own goals. It's also been great to stay close to the art community and play a small

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## Example 4: Mills College






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At NC State, we produce more than graduates – we combine the theoretical with the practical to create innovators and leaders of tomorrow. With 12 colleges representing all major academic disciplines, a student population of more than 31,000 and nearly 2,000 faculty, NC State is the largest university in North Carolina.

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**> student stories**

**Name:** Jazette Rivera  
**Hometown:** West Hartford, Connecticut  
**Majors:** Criminology & Political Science (double major)  
**Year:** Senior

Jazette's NC State experience has been much more than attending class and getting good grades. Not only is she better educated to handle the "real world," but she is eager to tackle local and national challenges and make a difference in the community around her.



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**> jazette rivera**

By trading the blustery Connecticut winters for the balmy breezes that blow through NC State's campus all year long, sophomore Jazette Rivera has found educational and life-enrichment opportunities she said wouldn't have been possible had she stayed in New England.


"NC State was simply the best fit for my personal needs out of the various colleges I was considering," said Rivera, a criminology and political science major. "The possibilities are endless – there is truly an organization or program to suit the needs of each individual student, from social to athletic to academic program."

A Park Scholar and a member of the University Scholars Program, Rivera has poured countless hours into the local community as the president of Mi Familia, as a high-school service mentor and as the co-chair of Service Raleigh. Like many of her classmates, Rivera took advantage of the opportunity to see the world, and is spending the summer of 2008 studying abroad in Guatemala.

"The academic, social, and extracurricular opportunities are vast and have given me the opportunity to become extremely active and acquire leadership roles on and off campus," said Rivera.

Back in the classroom, Rivera said her experience with NC State faculty members has also exceeded every expectation.

**> campus photo gallery**



# nc state / undergraduate admissions

**> student stories**

**Name:** Andrew Caldwell  
**Hometown:** Hot Springs, NC  
**Majors:** Biochemistry  
**Year:** Senior

After entering NC State on an R.O.T.C. scholarship, Andrew meandered from major to major as he searched for the perfect fit. With the help of his academic advisors, he decided on biochemistry, which would help satisfy his pre-medical requirements as he continues on a path toward becoming a medical officer in the U.S. Army.



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**> andrew caldwell**

Senior Andrew Caldwell came to NC State University armed with an R.O.T.C. scholarship and dreams of becoming a medical officer.

With the university's array of majors available to him, Caldwell was confident that by joining the Wolfpack family, he was putting himself in the best position to gain a high-quality education while laying the groundwork for a future in the military.

"I started out as a Meteorology major at NC State, but I wasn't 100-percent sure that it was what I wanted to do for my career," said Caldwell, a squad leader with the university's Army R.O.T.C. "So, I started to look into other majors I could get into."

With choices ranging from engineering to history and most everything in between, Caldwell learned on the expertise of his academic advisors to help him make a choice that would best chart his future path, but also allow him to remain involved in activities such as intramural sports, the university's Ambassador program and Alpha Epsilon Delta, a pre-med honors fraternity.

"I decided to get into Biochemistry, which would also satisfy my Pre-Medical requirements," he said. "Even with switching to a different major with different classes, my decision did not come with any graduation-delay penalty."

**> campus photo gallery**



# nc state / undergraduate admissions

**> student stories**

**Name:** Andrea Ertz  
**Hometown:** Burlington, IA  
**Majors:** First Year College  
**Year:** Sophomore

Looking to spread her wings and go somewhere completely different in search of higher education, Andrea Ertz fell in love with NC State during a campus visit with a family member.

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**> andrea ertz**

Always independent, Andrea Ertz felt the need to try something new after graduating from her Iowa-based high school. So, she packed her bags and headed east for NC State, where she has truly found a home away from home.

"My cousin, who graduated from State in 2007, was able to show me around the campus my junior year of high school," Ertz said. "I grew up in a small city at a very small private school and I had felt the need to branch out and go somewhere completely different from what I was used to."

After choosing NC State from a group of five North Carolina-based schools, Ertz spent her first year on campus in the university's First Year College program, where she became interested in Biological Sciences and joined NC State's marching band – the Power Sound of the South. And as a freshman transplanted 950 miles from home, the breadth of NC State's on-campus service and social activities gave Ertz a chance to begin to build deep friendships with fellow students who share her same passions and goals.

"I met some of the best friends I've made before classes even started," Ertz said of her bandmates. "NC State has such a wonderful atmosphere – everyone I've met was so friendly and helpful from my first day here."

From the challenging, yet creativity-fueled vibe of NC State's

**> campus photo gallery**



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